00025865

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AND

REMINISCENCES.

-86

W. Powell Frith

PAINTED BY HIMSELF IN 1858

London: Richard Bentley & Son. 1887

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AND REMINISCENCES.

BY

W. P. FRITH, R.A.,

CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR AND OF THE ORDER OF LEOPOLD; MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF BELGIUM, AND OF THE ACADEMIES OF STOCKHOLM, VIENNA, AND ANTWERP.

"The pencil speaks the tongue of every land."
DRYDEN.

Second Edition.

25865 ac

FC 24/7/71

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.
1887.

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

927.592
Foi/Foi/My-a
25865

00025865

To

MY WIFE,

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HER CONSTANT SYMPATHY

AND EVER-READY HELP,

I Dedicate

THESE REMINISCENCES,

TO THE WRITING OF WHICH I HAVE BEEN STIMULATED

BY HER BELIEF THAT THEY WILL BE

OF INTEREST TO THE GENERAL READER.

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AND

REMINISCENCES.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

THOUGH it has been constantly urged, and with a considerable amount of truth, that the lives of painters in their somewhat monotonous course present but little or no interest when told, I have thought that if the painter himself were to be the historian, and he were to describe simply and truly his early career up to the final success or failure of it, he might point a moral, though from want of literary ability he might not be able to adorn a tale. At the present date I have passed more than fifty years of artistic life; and I propose to relate the many ups and downs of it, my means and methods of study, some experiences of great difficulties, and the way they have been occasionally surmounted, together with matter more or less interesting arising from circumstances connecting me with men and things with

whom, and with which, I have been in contact in the progress of my life and work.

To begin at the beginning, I was born on the 9th of January, 1819, at a little village in Yorkshire called Aldfield. My father held a position of trust in the family of the then owner of Studley Royal, Mrs. Lawrence. He had a taste for art, and a proficiency in the practice of it which proper cultivation would have improved into excellence—as many of his drawings still in my possession go very far to prove. He collected engravings and pictures which were poor enough, but in which the ignorance which is sometimes bliss enabled him to see merits which did not exist; and it was this passion that blinded him into thinking that a wretched drawing done by me when I was about eleven years old showed signs of a genius worth cultivating. That drawing I still have: it is a copy from Moreland of an animal that might have been a dog under the hand of Moreland, but in my translation of it the species is left undetermined—anything worse or more hopeless it would be impossible to imagine. But I anticipate. I have no very early recollections interesting to myself or anybody else. My family, consisting of two brothers and a sister, with the "parent pair," left Aldfield about the year 1826, and went to Harrogate, a well-known watering-place, where my father became the landlord of a large rambling inn called The Dragon, now in ruins. It was at that time that the little general education ever allowed me was begun, and I was sent to school at Knaresborough.

How fortunate is the present generation compared with that of sixty years ago! How great the change for the better—in the fact of such schools as those to which I was sent, all more or less of the "Dotheboys Hall" pattern, being improved off the face of the earth—is so evident as to need no proof from me. It is a great satisfaction to me to feel that I have been able to give my own children such educations as have enabled them to take positions, and to do work, utterly denied to me.

As nearly as I can remember, it was on a winter's evening in 1830 when I was sitting idly looking over some of my father's engravings—having previously obeyed an order from my mother to wash my hands, as those members in their normal condition were justly considered to be unfit to touch those precious prints—that I asked for a pencil and paper, and tried to copy an engraving of a dog. What impelled me to the deed which actually determined my future life I cannot tell. If I might guess at the motive, I think it was merely that I thought it would afford me a chance of sitting up later than the hour of the children's bedtime—rigorously fixed at nine o'clock—as it did, for I was allowed to finish my wonderful production there and then. If I have a doubt as to what prompted me to my first work, I have none whatever as to what induced me to undertake the second.

I received sixpence for the dog, with a promise of a similar reward for another effort. From that moment, and on such evidence, I was considered the genius of the family, and schoolmasters were in-

formed that all other learning must be considered secondary to the cultivation of this great gift! and very secondary indeed it became. I found copying Dutch prints much easier than geography and the use of the globes, to say nothing of Latin, for a very slight experience of that language led me to feel that life would be unendurable if I were compelled to learn it; so that beyond a little of the grammar, and the acquisition of a few quotations—which I find useful to this day when I desire to create an impression that they are but samples of a wealth of the classical knowledge that I possess—I know nothing whatever about it. Greek was not one of the accomplishments taught at any of my schools, so I was spared that trouble. My education was finished at a large establishment at St. Margaret's, near Dover, kept by a very amiable man named Temple, who, with a staff of ushers, boarded and educated nearly a hundred boys for twenty pounds a year apiece. I really believe the education was quite extraordinary for the price paid for it; but I cannot speak with authority, for I was only allowed a very little of it, the most of my time being taken up with my eternal copying in chalks, or lead pencil, with a little pen and ink for a change, from any good, bad, or indifferent print that fell in my way. I was placed in charge of the drawing-master, a Frenchman, with strict injunctions to allow me to do as I liked; and these injunctions received his careful attention, for he never interfered with me. Indeed, I soon found that his knowledge was as limited as my own; and

it will scarcely be believed when we see the system, admirable as it is, which is now almost universally adopted in school-teaching, that in my early days bad drawings of impossible landscapes, and still more outrageous figures, were the only models placed before art students, who made bad worse, and only learnt that which they had most studiously to forget when they began serious work.

I remained about two years at St. Margaret's, and except a little French, I learnt nothing. There were several French boys from whom I, *nolens volens* (here you have classical example number one), picked up a little of the polite language of the world; in return, I endeavoured to instil into one of them a little knowledge of the manly art of self-defence as it is practised in this country. There was a chronic state of ill-feeling between the French and English boys. Waterloo was a red rag which we pretty often shook in their faces; frogs were sought and found in the ditches about St. Margaret's, and also in the beds of the French boys, who, on remonstrating, were accused of ingratitude for complaining of gratuitous gifts of their national food. I forget what my immediate cause of quarrel was with one of them (a long, thin fellow, taller than I); whatever it may have been, the result was a fight behind a haystack in a neighbouring farmyard—that is, if the affair could be dignified by the name of a fight. I placed myself in the posture of self-defence with which I was familiar from my usual source of information—engraving. My adversary, who was very angry,

stared at my projected fists for a moment, then flew at me like a cat, scratching, kicking, and clawing in a very irregular manner; and it was only after a desperate struggle to free myself from his long legs and get my hair out of his clutches with some loss of it, that I was able to give him "one on his peepers" (to use the language of the P.R.), which produced a very black eye, and made him cry, and the battle was over.

This was my first and last fight.

To turn from war to peace, it must be evident to any thoughtful person who may be improving his mind by reading these pages, that my art studies must have resulted in a very large heap of copies from prints, but never in an attempt to draw anything from nature, or to design a composition from imagination—an element of mind which I might, or might not, possess, but without which success in art is hopeless. I fancy everybody can remember the exquisite delight of his first visit to a theatre, or the reading of his first novel; both those experiences are very vivid to me at this moment. Long before I went to St. Margaret's, when I was very young, I revelled in works of imagination—the novels of G. P. R. James, the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe, and, above and before all, the works of Scott and Cooper. The two last named still retain their charm for me. Mr. James I have tried again, but the old love is dead, and I now wonder it was ever born. I can recall the bright pictures with which the Wizard of the North filled my imagina-

tion. Why I did not, as a boy, try to reproduce Rebecca and Ivanhoe, or Jeanie Deans, or Madge Wildfire (I had enough of them afterwards), however imperfectly, is now a wonder to me—a wonder and a lesson—for unless my sensibilities, like Miss Squeers', "came late into blow," I could have done something in the shape of original work instead of wasting valuable, irrecoverable time in profitless copying. I know very well that I never was, nor under any circumstances could have become, a great artist; but I am a very successful one, and my advice is often asked by anxious parents who produce specimens of their children's work, and place me in the really awful position of a kind of destiny over the future of their sons or daughters. Let me advise all artists who may find themselves elected arbiters of the fate of others, to be as dumb as the ancient oracle when difficulties were presented. Except in the rarest and most exceptional cases, judgment from early specimens is absolutely impossible. Consider the quality of mind and body requisite for a successful artistic career—long and severe study from antique statues, from five to eight hours every day; then many months' hard work from the life, with attendance at lectures, study of perspective, anatomy, etc.; general reading to be attended to also—all this before painting is attempted, and when attempted the student may find he has no eye for colour. I do not mean colour-blind, which is of course fatal, but that he is not appreciative of all the subtle tints and tones of flesh; or, what is more

fearful still, he may find that he has all the language of art at his fingers'-ends, and that he has nothing to say. I illustrate this by an example of one of my fellow-students at the Royal Academy, a young fellow named Powell, who died long ago. He was highly accomplished in many ways; he drew splendidly. His studies from the nude were the admiration of student and professor alike. He gained medals in all the schools, and when he tried to turn his knowledge to account and produce pictures, he failed utterly. Composition and arrangement of the colours, and light and shadow, necessary in a group of more or less figures, cannot be taught, or if taught by line and rule the result is nil; the whole thing is a matter of feeling and imagination. An artist must see his picture finished in his mind's eye before he begins it, or he will never be an artist at all. Powell could not appreciate the difference between a good composition and a bad one, nor could he understand the value and importance of light and shadow. I think what I have just said is worthy the attention of advised and advisers alike, and I desire to impress on all those who rely upon advice, no matter from whatever eminent source, that the risk they run is terrible.

CHAPTER II.

MY FUTURE DESTINY DISCUSSED.

I NOW go back to my own career. On returning home from school with my bundle of specimens, a family council was called, with friends to assist. There was no doubt in the mind of one of them, I verily believe, that I was a great genius.

"Why, just look," said an old woman in the shape of a man, "you can't tell one from t'other!" showing a print of Teniers' and my chalk copy from it; and they certainly were, and are (for they still hang and can be compared on my staircase), very much alike.

I was the wonder of High Harrogate, then my home. People came and asked for a sight of the wonderful works, which my dear mother showed with a pardonable pride. She could not, and did not, ask her guests to wash their hands—a treatment, as I remember, desirable for some of them; but she would never let the drawings leave her own hands, for fear of the precious things being rubbed or otherwise injured.

"If I was you," said one wiseacre, "I'd never let

him have any teaching; they'd spoil him. Look at Mr. Wilkie now, the man that did the 'Blind Fiddler' and that; he was self-taught."

"No, he wasn't," said my father. "Don't you talk of what you know nothing about."

I may remark here that my father was a gruff, silent man, but by no means such a fool as to think that a self-taught artist had anything but a fool for both master and pupil. At this time I was in my fifteenth year, and it was thought desirable that my future career should be determined. My eldest brother had died, my youngest one was intended for the law, and I for the arts if I decided on that profession. Parents, in nearly all instances that have come within my experience, have shown marked and often angry opposition to the practice of art as a profession for their children; naturally and properly I think, considering the precarious nature of its pursuit. My parents were exceptions to that rule, and I shall never forget my father's look of disappointment when, on his asking me if I should like to go to London and learn to be a real artist, I replied:

"I don't care much about it."

"Well, what would you like to be? You must do something for your living, you know."

"I think I should like to be an auctioneer, or something of that kind."

"An auctioneer be ——!" said my father, who used strong language sometimes.

Itinerant artists, generally portrait-painters, wan-

dered over the country fifty years ago, more I think than they do now; and so long as vanity influences the human being, there will be work for the limners of faces, for not only do the sitters satisfy themselves and their friends with the "counterfeit presentment" of their figures, but they fancy themselves encouragers of the arts as well. Fuseli, who could not have painted a decent portrait to save his life, but who produced works of a weird and poetic character of great excellence (which rarely found purchasers), says in one of his lectures, after abusing portrait-painting as a low kind of art, "Every fool who has a phiz to expose and a guinea to throw away, thinks by the expenditure of that small sum he becomes a patron of art." There was a goodly crop of such people in Yorkshire, and amongst the reapers was one, whose name I suppress, that my father took me to see—a Mr. H——, who had pitched his tent at Knaresborough, and turned a large drawing-room over a linen-draper's shop into a studio. Judging from the number of finished and unfinished portraits on easels and against the walls, the artist was doing a good stroke of business. To me they were "too lovely," to use a colloquialism of to-day—one of a stout lady in emerald-green velvet quite won my heart, and I really felt a mild desire to do likewise. It must be remembered that up to this time I had seen no modern pictures, but only the ancient ones in my father's collection. Those were very dark, so obscure as to cause one of our Harrogate friends to say that he "didn't care a

button for the old masters, for you have to take a sponge and wet 'em all over before you know what the subjects are about."

Mr. H——'s pictures were bright and lovely, and he received a commission there and then from my father to paint my mother, for which he was to receive twenty pounds and free quarters at the Dragon during the progress of the work. I was allowed to watch the operation, and all our friends applauded the result. My mother was the one unsatisfied—"he had not caught her expression," she said, and she was right. The picture is now in the possession of the proprietor of the Granby Hotel at Harrogate, where I saw it three years ago. It is indeed a forlorn production, without one quality of decent art in it. Poor H——! he tried his fortune in London, sent picture after picture to the Academy, and never got one exhibited.

"I know they have a personal spite against me," he said to me one day. "And look at their own infernal rubbish! I am not conceited" (poor H——!). "I walked round those rooms" (at Somerset House) "and compared my own work with what is there, and it's enough to make a man's blood boil to see such things hung and such as mine rejected." Then after a pause he said, "Look here, Frith—now you won't mention what I am going to tell you to anyone; oh, I know you won't—now next year I shall send my portraits in under a feigned name, 'Algernon Sydney,' or something like that, and then you will just see whether those men are

honest or not; for I have heard—in fact I know—that so long as my own name is attached to my work, it will never be admitted."

Next year came, but "Algernon Sydney" came not; no such name could be found in the catalogue.

"My dear H——," said I on meeting him shortly after the opening of the Exhibition, "did you send your pictures to the R.A., as you said you would, under a feigned name?"

"Yes, I did," said he; "but the ruffians found me out, and rejected them again, of course."

H—— soon fled from the battlefield where he was always beaten by far stronger men, and became quite a favourite portrait-painter in a town in the north of England. There he married one of his sitters—a very handsome girl four-and-twenty years younger than himself—and died at a ripe old age a few years ago, in the firm belief, not an uncommon one amongst disappointed artists, that he had been ruined by the Royal Academy.

As my father and I returned home after seeing the H—— collection, he recurred to the subject of my future destiny.

"Surely you would like to be able to paint such pictures as H——'s," said he.

"Yes, but I never could; still, I will try if you wish it."

Not much of the sacred fire in all this, not much of the passion for art which Constable once stigmatized in a man who painted very poor pictures, and who claimed a right to have them exhibited because

painting had been all his life a passion that possessed him. "Yes," said Constable, "a *bad* passion."

Soon after this my father showed me a letter from Sir Launcelot Shadwell, who was, I think, Vice-Chancellor, and who had been one of the visitors at the Dragon for several seasons. The letter was in reply to an inquiry as to the best way of proceeding in the event of my studying as an artist. Sir Launcelot had seen my drawings, and, being pardonably ignorant, had seen, or fancied he saw, not only promise, but such performance in them as would make much instruction unnecessary! Mr. Phillips, R.A., however, a friend of the Vice-Chancellor's, informs all and sundry that the kind of drawing described to him meant nothing; that if I intended to follow the profession seriously, I had best go to London and place myself under a Mr. Sass, who had a school of art in Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury; and after I had worked hard there for two or three years, I might possibly become a student of the Royal Academy, where I should find ample and gratuitous instruction. I was a light-minded, rather idle, flighty youth, not at all fond of serious work, and this letter frightened me. I told my father I did not think my health would stand such work as that.

"What do you mean—your health? What's the matter with your health? You have never been ill in your life, except when you had measles. Don't talk such stuff! Now look here," he added; "I want to talk to you seriously" (he seldom talked,

and always seriously). "You have your living to get; everybody says you show ability for the artist business; will you follow it? If you will, I shall take you to London, and am willing to spend some money on it; and if you won't do this, what will you do? If you are not an artist, what will you be?"

I had been two or three times to an auction-room, and the business seemed a very easy and, I had heard, a profitable one; so instead of saying I would die rather than not be a painter, I reiterated to my father that I thought I should like auctioneering better. Again the blank look of disappointment; then after a pause he said:

"Very well, will you agree to this? You and I will go to London. I will take your drawings and show them to Sir Launcelot Shadwell's friend the R.A. If he says you ought to be an artist, will you go to this Mr. What's-his-name in Bloomsbury and learn the business? If he thinks nothing of your drawings, I will apprentice you to Oxenham's in Oxford Street, and you can learn auctioneering. Now, what do you say?"

"Very well, I will."

"You agree to what I propose?"

"Yes, I do."

"Now go and tell your mother; she will be pleased, I know."

Before I take leave of the Dragon Hotel, an incident which created an ineffaceable impression on my youthful mind may be related. The house was

a large, rambling structure, the basement consisting of a bar, a kitchen in which the giant Blunderbore might have regaled himself, reception-rooms of all sorts and sizes, and a ballroom of enormous length; to say nothing of parlours rejoicing in fancy names, such as "The Green," "The George," "The Bear," "The Angel," and so on. The sleeping accommodation of the guests consisted of rooms of various sizes, on each side of very long and narrow passages, dignified by the name of galleries, which started in different directions, from no special point, according to the caprice of the builders, to whom changes and additions had been entrusted and made at various periods during more than a hundred years. The rooms were destitute of bells, but there was one common to each gallery. It was about the year 1828 or 1829 that the son of my father's banker, accompanied by his wife's brother, a Captain Rowe, came to Harrogate in the hope that some weeks' experience of the fine air and the waters might restore his shattered health. The banker's son, whose name was Owen, had been but recently married. Mrs. Owen went to visit some friends in the South, leaving her husband to the care of her brother. These gentlemen came to us as my father's friends, and not as ordinary guests to the hotel. They dined with us, and on the evening of the day of their arrival my brother and I were allowed to assist at a round game of cards, and to sit up much beyond our usual bedtime. We were ordered off at last, to our great regret, for both the guests,

especially the invalid, made much of us, and winked at certain boyish tricks which, I am afraid, bore a strong resemblance to cheating. My brother and I slept together in a room made from an odd corner separated from the galleries. We were no sooner in bed than we were both fast asleep. How long I had been in that condition of "honeyed slumber" I know not, but I was suddenly aroused from it by a fearful cry—quite unlike anything I have heard before or since. I jumped out of bed, followed by my brother, and we opened our door in time to see two white figures, one flying down a long gallery and the other pursuing, and uttering yell after yell. They disappeared down a staircase, and in the direction of a room in which I knew my father was likely to be, as he was in the habit of using it for business purposes—making up accounts and so on—often till the small hours of the morning.

My brother and I crept downstairs in mortal terror, and saw the open door of my father's room in which a light was burning. Except for the violent barking of a dog that seldom left my father, the silence was unbroken. We were trying to see into the room when one of the white figures, Captain Rowe, came stealthily up to us, literally paralyzing me with fear.

"Now what on earth are you boys doing out of bed? Go back this moment."

We couldn't move; but the Captain went cautiously to the door of the room and looked in. His naked feet could not have been heard, but

quicker than thought a terrific blow was struck with some hard substance by an unseen hand, accompanied by an awful cry.

In the rapidity of his exit the Captain had pulled the door after him, thus making a shield for himself which no doubt saved his life. He rushed upstairs, beckoning us to follow. In terror and tears we followed him. He pushed us into our room, ordered us instantly to lock ourselves in, and not to stir again till the servant came to us in the morning. Sleep was out of the question. From our window we could see that morning had come, for day was breaking; and as we looked, we heard my father's voice calling to some men who were driving a cart past the house. The cart stopped, and the men seemed to join my father, and we heard no more. Presently the men reappeared, and the cart was driven away. Next morning my mother, with many tears, explained the mystery.

Mr. Owen and the Captain went to sleep in a double-bedded room. The Captain was awoke by his brother-in-law, who, kneeling upon his body, was endeavouring to strangle him. Captain Rowe, by far the more powerful man of the two, flung his assailant on to the floor, and made for the door, feeling sure, from the cries and wild words, that sudden insanity had seized his friend. The door was locked, and for an awful instant — during which he heard the madman at the fire-irons—the key refused to turn. He threw his vast strength against the door, and burst it open. Then began

the flight and pursuit that we witnessed. Rowe made his way accidentally to the room in which my father sat, closely followed by Owen armed with the poker, which afterwards dealt such a blow to the parlour door as to mark it for many years, (indeed, till it was replaced by a new one). The sudden light seemed to dazzle and divert the madman, who stood quietly in my father's room, staring at the dog, who fortunately continued to bark. My father guessed the whole business, and went quietly to the window and opened the shutters. Most fortunately at the moment a cart was passing, and two men, called by my father, came through the window, went quietly behind the maniac—who continued staring at the dog—pinioned him, seized the poker, and threw him without much difficulty on to the sofa. My father pulled down one of the bell-ropes, and in a few minutes the poor fellow was harmless.

Owen never recovered. He was one of the most violent patients in the asylum at York, where he afterwards died.

CHAPTER III.

MY CAREER DETERMINED.

It was on a bleak March afternoon in 1835 that I started for London to make my fortune. My father had charge of me and a large portfolio of drawings, the exhibition of which to a well-selected judge was to devote me to art, or tie me to an auctioneer's desk. I think at the present time an express train requires little more than four hours to make the journey from Leeds to London — fifty years ago the quickest Royal Mail passage occupied never less than twenty-four hours, and sometimes, in snowy winter weather especially, much longer; and the weariness, the cramp, the sleeplessness of those terrible times can with difficulty be realized by the luxurious travellers of to-day. My father and I were packed inside with two other passengers.

"Is this your son, sir?" said one.

"I believe so," replied my father.

"Then would you mind asking him to manage his legs a little better? I should like to get to London with some skin on my shins, if it's all the same to the young gentleman."

We entered London through Highgate Archway, and my first impression of the great city was very disappointing—of course totally unlike the grand place I had imagined. The morning was foggy, and from a distance London resembled a huge gray bank of fog, with the dome of St. Paul's rising out of it; and when we entered it by dirty Islington, and rattled through streets each uglier and dirtier than the last, my illusions vanished.

The coach stopped at the Saracen's Head, on Snow Hill. Each passenger claimed his luggage. My precious drawings had been preserved in a folio covered with some material like tarpauling, impervious to the weather. They were safe, as were our portmanteaus. The hotel porter fetched us a lumbering hackney-coach, driven by a man whose coat of many capes amazed me. Two miserable horses dragged us slowly to my uncle's house in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square.

My uncle's name was Scaife, and he became my uncle by marrying my mother's sister. His trade was that of an hotel-keeper. Scaife's Hotel (now Symonds') was a very fashionable establishment, and my aunt and uncle were what is called thorough business people, with a contempt for professions generally, and for the artistic in particular.

They simply thought my parents insane when the project of my embracing the disreputable calling was broached, and they said so. My uncle was a shrewd man of the world, without any of the vices that so often disfigure that character; and I quite believe a

more honourable man never lived, and he was respected accordingly. His education had been more neglected than mine, the result being a difference of opinion with Lindley Murray, and a disregard of the aspirate—except where it should never be used—that was astounding.

Though my aunt and uncle disapproved of my possible artistic career as much, or more, than they approved of the auctioneering proposition, they heartily welcomed us to their home; indeed, to the last days of their lives they were kindness, even affection itself to me. If in the course of my history I may touch on some of my uncle's peculiarities, I shall treat them as tenderly as if I loved them, as indeed I did.

The first step in my interest that it was necessary to take, was to find Mr. Phillips, or some other eminent artist, upon whose verdict my fate—as agreed between me and my father—was to be decided. Sir L. Shadwell was away, so there was no way of approaching Mr. Phillips, whose title of R.A. created a sensation of awe in my father, and of ridicule in my uncle.

"R.A., sir," said my uncle. "Why, they're as poor as rats, the lot of 'em. I know for a fact that ——," naming one of the most eminent animal-painters that ever lived, "never paid for a dead swan, or a deer, or something, that he got from that place in the New Road; and what is more, he lodged for six weeks with a cousin of my 'ead-waiter, and ran away without paying a farthing. And

that's the kind of thing you're going to bring your son up to !"

Another judge must be procured, as Mr. Phillips failed us; and my father soon found one in the person of a Mr. Partridge, who lived a few doors from my uncle's hotel: a portrait and history painter of reputation, and, what was more to our purpose, a friend of many of the members of the Royal Academy. Nothing less than the veto of a real R.A. would satisfy my father that I was unworthy of following the arts. Mr. Partridge looked at my drawings, and gave no opinion; but he kindly allowed my father to leave the portfolio, telling him that the contents should be shown to the brothers Chalon, both Academicians, who were engaged to visit him in the evening.

With what trepidation my father went to see Mr. Partridge the next morning, and with what an air of triumph he called on me to keep my promise, I well remember; as, indeed, I do the indifference I felt about the whole thing.

I may interpose for a moment here to complete the history of the Messrs. Chalon's influence, settling —as their judgment of my drawings that night did— my lifelong career. Many years after I was a Royal Academician, Mr. Alfred Chalon (his brother had died) was a guest at my house, and on his paying me a passing compliment on a picture I had painted, I took the opportunity of thanking him for his favourable verdict at Mr. Partridge's, for, said I, "if it had not been for you I should not have been an

artist at all." Chalon looked astonished, and then said, "Of course I knew Partridge, but I can remember nothing like what you charge me with." I tried to recall the circumstances to his memory. I described the drawings, told him the date of the transaction, but he could remember nothing of it. "What became of the drawings?" said Chalon. "I have them, many of them at least, and could show them to you." "I wish you would," was the reply; and the drawings were produced. The old artist looked long and carefully at them, evidently trying in vain to remember them; at last he said: "Do you mean to tell me that I ever saw those things before?" "Indeed you did." "And that I advised that you should be trained as an artist on such evidence as that?" "Indeed you did." "Then," said Chalon, "I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"Mr. Partridge wants to talk to you," said my father. "You will be delighted with him; he is one of the most elegant-mannered men I ever met—quite the gentleman—and he paints such lovely pictures. Why he isn't an R.A., I can't think."

"It's because he's too clever, sir," broke in my uncle. "Why, those painters are that jealous of one another, the wonder is the whole thing don't break down! And it will some day, Master William, just about the time that you are ready for it."

"Ah," said my father, "if I could live to see that day!"

"What day?" said my aunt, who had just joined us.

"Frith would like to see his son a R.A. at

Somerset House, sooner than the head of such a business as Oxenham's," said my uncle. "That's the sort of day he wants to see, good Lord!"

If my father heard this, he never replied to it, but ordered me to go with him at once to Mr. Partridge, whom I found to fulfil all my father had said of him. His manners were delightful, copied, I was told afterwards, a good deal from those of Sir Thomas Lawrence; but nothing but real kindness of heart could have influenced him when he took great pains to instil into my immature mind some first principles of art, taking a bust—the Clytie, I think—as his text. I thought it was beautiful talk, but I didn't understand a syllable of it. Every word he said was miles high over my head. He talked, among other things, of "breadth." What on earth did he mean? In the light in which the bust was placed, he said, "Now see how broad the light and shade is." It didn't appear broad at all to me, in my sense of the word. Tone, too; what's tone? thought I. I know the tone of a fiddle, but what tone can come of that thing? But the word that puzzled me most was *chiaro-oscuro;* it sounded to me like a catch-word used by the conjurers whose performances I had seen at Harrogate. In short, I was thoroughly bewildered, and when he offered to lend me the bust to draw from, I fervently hoped it would get broken in its transit to my uncle's; but it did not. It was taken up into a bedroom. A drawing-board, paper, and chalk were given to me, and I was left alone with the dreadful thing.

I stared at it with a stare as stony as its own for some time, and then I tried to draw from it; to take its likeness, in fact. I could make nothing of it. I could *not* get my attempt to look in the least like a human head. I tried and tried—all in vain; so I put down my port-crayon and had a good cry, in the midst of which my father came into the room.

"What's the matter? can't you manage it?"

"No; I never could if I tried for a year."

"Well, never mind; give it up then. I want to tell you that I have just returned from the School of Art in Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury, kept by Mr. Sass, and have arranged for you to go there in a few days. He has a lot of pupils. He took me all over the place—splendid place—large gallery filled with casts—some like that, others big figures as large as life and larger: every means for the study of the profession, Mr. Sass says. You are to live in the house, board with the family, and I think you will be very comfortable. There is another indoor pupil older than you, 'very advanced,' Mr. Sass says."

"Is Mr. Sass a very gentlemanly man like Mr. Partridge? Does he talk as he did? What does he mean by the other boy being '*very advanced*'?"

This was rather a poser. After a few moments' thought, my father said:

"I suppose Mr. Sass meant the young man had got on a good deal in consequence of his teaching, which you can do if you like to work hard."

"I should like to go to the play, one of the big theatres; may I?"

"Well, we will see. You mustn't keep your uncle and aunt up late, you know."

There were some days to elapse before I should be consigned to the care of Mr. Sass, and the hard labour to which I felt I was condemned, and these were devoted to amusement. I was taken to the Adelaide Gallery, where a steam-gun discharged a hundred bullets every minute—a terrific weapon. The man who showed it gave a kind of lecture upon it; assured the audience that the Duke of Wellington came to see it the day before yesterday, and told the speaker that if he could have had the benefit of the steam-gun at the Battle of Waterloo, that engagement would have been over "in about half an hour, instead of lasting all day." He also said that all the regiments in our present army would be furnished with steam-guns, and it was expected in consequence that there would be no more fighting. The Adelaide Gallery and the steam-cannon are no more; the fighting continues.

And then the theatre. The first play I saw was Shakespeare's "King John." Macready was the King; Charles Kemble, Faulconbridge; Mrs. Warner, I think, Constance. Can I ever forget it, or my delight in it? My father quarrelled with a man who sat next us in the pit because he chose the moment when Constance moved the house to tears, to disturb the silence—only broken by half-stifled sobs—by sucking an orange in a loud slobbery fashion.

When the queen retired, and the house was gradually resuming its equanimity, my father turned to his neighbour, and, wiping his own eyes, said:

"Well, you didn't seem to be affected by the acting of that scene like the rest of us."

"Why should I?" replied the man. "It isn't true; and if it was, it's nothing to me."

"You are a nice man to come to the play and disturb other people. Why can't you suck your oranges at home? you'd find it cheaper."

"Look here," said the man, opening a handkerchief and showing a nest of oranges, "I shall put away all those before I go; and if you object, you had better move into a private box."

My father's temper was short, like himself, and the quarrel grew till the audience interfered, and the call to both to "shut up" was obeyed. I shall not allow the fear of being charged with the *laudatur temporis acti* disposition, to prevent me from asserting that no such acting as Macready's King John, or Kemble's Faulconbridge, can be seen on our stage now. Macready's fearful whisper—when, having placed his mouth close to Hubert's ear, and dropping his half-hearted hints of his desire for Arthur's death, he throws off the mask, and in two words, "*the grave*," he makes his wish unmistakable—was terrific: the two words were uttered in a whisper that could be heard at the back of Drury Lane gallery, and the effect was tremendous. You felt as if you were assisting at a terrible crime. The grace and gallantry of Faulconbridge, as Charles Kemble acted the

character, were unapproachably delightful; and of the tone in which he repeated again and again to Austria, "And hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs," no description can give an idea. Then his swagger into Angers after the famous scene which leads to the surrender of the town! I can see him now, as, with the elegant saunter appropriate to the character, he disappears under the portcullis, and the place being new to him, he looks to the right and left with the insolence of a conqueror. His Mercutio, Don Felix, Cassio, Charles Surface, were simply perfect. My father was as fond of the play as I, and I was indulged till my uncle began to look a little black at our late hours.

I shall only mention one theatre more — that managed by Madame Vestris, then in the zenith of her beauty. I fell madly in love with her at once, and would have flown far away from Sass and the studio, as he called it (I was just sixteen), if I could have induced that lovely being to be my companion. It was at the Olympic, in Wych Street, where the enchantress held her nightly revels.

"Oh, father!" I remember exclaiming when she first burst upon the stage and me; "isn't she a beautiful creature?"

"Eh—what? You attend to the play, and don't talk."

And there was Liston, and Oxberry, and Mrs. Orger, and Charles Mathews, whose first appearance I did not witness, for he had played three nights before I saw him, in "The Old and Young

Stager"—Liston playing the old coachman with the many-caped coat, and Mathews a young groom, I think.

It is time for me to cease this holiday-talk, and go to work and to Sass's care, to which on one memorable evening I was confided. My father beguiled the walk down Brook Street, down Oxford Street, through Hanway Yard, along Great Russell Street, to my future home, with much fatherly warning and advice; I all the while wondering how much pocket-money he was going to allow me, how much money I was to be trusted with for ordinary expenses, whether I was to order and pay for my own clothes, etc. A feeling possessed me that I was afloat in the world, and that I ought to be trusted to manage my pecuniary affairs, for which I felt the capacity of a Chancellor of the Exchequer. As nothing on the subject was volunteered by my father until we both stood on the doorstep of No. 6, Charlotte Street, under the bust of Minerva, which to this day looks down on the passer-by, I—being possessed at the moment of a very few shillings and a half-sovereign wrapped up in paper, on which my mother had written "A friend in need"—ventured to ask how much money he was going to give me for the many expenses I must incur beyond the sum paid for my board and lodging and tuition. I shall never forget my bitter disappointment at being told that I must get an account-book, into which every item of my expenditure must be entered; that I must be satisfied with £2, which he handed to me, and when

that was accounted for to the satisfaction of my uncle, that treasurer would advance me £2 more. To a young person who expected to have the immediate control of a considerable income this was a blow, and I am ashamed to confess that I bore it so badly as to show my disappointment by bursting into tears—tears not drawn from me only by financial disappointment, but I would fain think as much, or more, by the pangs of separation. As we parted, my father kissed me—I can feel now the rough scrub of his shaven chin—and I passed under a roof which sheltered me for the following two years.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHOOL OF ART.

MR. HENRY SASS was a student of the Royal Academy, and a contemporary of Wilkie, Mulready, Haydon, and many others less known to fame, all of whom continued his steadfast friends, supplying him now and again with pupils whose education those distinguished men were too busy to undertake. Though Mr. Sass thoroughly understood the principles of art, and could most efficiently inculcate them, he never succeeded in putting them satisfactorily into practice on his own account. His pictures were coldly correct, never displaying an approach to the sacred fire of genius, and almost always unsaleable. Under these circumstances, and warned by an increasing family, Mr. Sass established his School of Art, at that time the only one existing. The duties of the school fully occupied the master's attention, leaving him time only to exhibit occasionally at Somerset House, and then only a small picture always called "A Study of a Head;" and even this modest contribution was not allowed to escape the malignity of the critics, one of whom, in his general

notice of one of the annual exhibitions, said: "Mr. Sass continues to exhibit a study of something which he persists in calling a head."

It was the firm and settled conviction of my master that the neglect of the public, so unmistakably displayed towards his work, was the result of the dense ignorance of the so-called patrons of art; it was also his conviction that if he could have afforded to devote himself to the practice of art instead of the teaching of it, he could have grasped the highest honours of the profession. Dear old Sass! I think he was wrong. It ought to have been, and it was, a consolation to him to feel that by instilling his admirable principles into others, he gave them ample means of achieving a success denied to himself. Many of his pupils became painters of high reputation, several were afterwards Academicians, and one and all, I feel sure, would, if death had not sealed so many lips, endorse all I have to say in favour of the admirable art-teaching of Henry Sass. I may mention here one distinguished man, my old friend Millais, who was Sass's pupil, though only for a short time, I think. His remarkable powers enabled him to enter the Royal Academy Schools *per saltum*; and I can well remember the amusement of the students—some of whom were then, as now, almost middle-aged men—when a little handsome boy, dressed in a long blue coat confined at the waist by a black leather band, walked into the Antique School and gravely took his place amongst us. This was my first sight of Millais, for I had

left Sass's and become an R.A. student a year or two before the appearance of my young friend. But to return to my early work. In the opening lines of these reminiscences, I have said that I hoped to point a moral, by which I meant that much that I might have to tell would be of use to future students, either in the form of warning or encouragement.

Reynolds says, "You must have no dependence on your own genius; if you have great talents, industry will improve them; if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply the deficiency." Another writer says, "Genius means the power of taking great pains." I don't think either of those great men could have been quite serious, or could have intended their advice to be taken literally, but rather to enforce the absolute necessity of hard work. Would the severest application have produced a Raphael or a Hogarth? No. But neither Raphael nor Hogarth could have produced their immortal works without the exercise of painful industry; and when is the time for that exercise? In healthy youth—a time, alas! when temptation to idle pleasure is most difficult to resist. No artist who has arrived at mature age can look back at his early opportunities without a remorseful sense of his neglect of many of them. I can even accuse myself, fool that I was, of feeling contempt for the scrupulous attention insisted on by my master to details that seemed to my youthful wisdom to be absurdly unimportant. I know better now, and suffer justly for my folly.

Sass's course of study was very severe; my precious drawings were looked at and remarked upon by the master, to the best of my recollection, in the following words: "Ah, copies from Dutch prints! Shouldn't wonder if you turn out eventually to take to engraving. What ever induced you to spend time in doing such things? Terrible waste. Can't have done you much harm if you can contrive to forget all about them. You will spend your evenings here in studying the compositions of Michael Angelo, and other great artists. You will find a large collection in my library, but no Dutch prints."

The master had prepared with his own hand a great number of outlines from the antique, beginning with Juno's eye and ending with the Apollo—hands, feet, mouths, faces, in various positions, all in severely correct outline. The young student, beginning with Juno's eye, was compelled to copy outlines that seemed numberless; some ordered to be repeated again and again, till Mr. Sass could be induced to place the long-desired "Bene" at the bottom of them. This course, called "drawing from the flat," was persisted in till the pupil was considered advanced enough to be allowed to study the mysteries of light and shade. A huge white plaster ball, standing on a pedestal, was the next object of attention; by the representation of which in Italian chalk and on white paper the student was to be initiated into the first principles of light, shadow, and rotundity. The effect to be produced by a

process of hatching. No stumps—objects of peculiar horror to our master—were allowed. Sass's hatred of the stump gave rise to a ribald but admirable caricature by one of the students, who drew the professor (a wonderful likeness of him) in the infernal regions, surrounded by boy demons (supposed to be old pupils cut off in their early career), tormenting him with stumps to all eternity. The drawing was carefully kept out of the master's sight, and well for the student it was, for his expulsion would certainly have followed any glimpse that irascible individual might have got of it.

I spent six weeks over that awful ball (the drawing exists still, a wonder of line-work), the result being a certain amount of modelling knowledge very painfully acquired. Then came a gigantic bunch of plaster grapes, intended to teach differences of tone (I soon learnt what tone meant) in a collection of objects, with the lights and shadows and reflections peculiar to each. How I hated and despised this second and, I thought, most unnecessary trial of my patience! but it was to be done, and I did it. Then permission was given for an attempt at a fragment from the antique in the form of a hand. Thus step by step I advanced, till I was permitted to draw from the entire figure. How I regret that I did not exert myself to draw more figures and more carefully! but the severity tried me very much, and I felt very weary and indifferent. I could feel no interest in what I was about. Perspective bewildered me, and to this day I know little

or nothing about that dreadful science; and anatomy and I parted after a very short and early acquaintance. I am relating the true history of my early days, and it must be borne in mind that for the kind of art I have practised, very little perspective and anatomy are required; but the neglect with which I treated those acquirements would be fatal to the artist who may be pursuing the highest branch of art.

All my evenings were passed in making outlines from Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment," the wonderful cartoon of Pisa, and other work from that immortal hand, together with studies from other old masters—Guercino, the Caracci, Poussin, and the like. After two years' working from the antique—I can scarcely call it study, so ever to be regrettedly perfunctory were my doings—I was allowed "to try for the Academy;" and to my surprise and the astonishment of my master, I was admitted as pro bationer. But before I tell of my experience in that capacity, I will try to describe the school and students at Sass's as they existed in the reign of that professor. A door on the left, as you entered the house, opened upon a passage shut off by curtains at the bottom of it, from a large circular hall lighted from the top, in which were placed, in an angle of light copied from the Pantheon at Rome, statues, the size of the originals, of the Laocoon, the Apollo, the Venus de Medici, and other famous antique works. The passage through which the gallery was entered, was lined with drawings done by favourite and successful pupils. Facing the passage at the bot-

tom of the gallery was a staircase leading to an upper school, much smaller than the lower gallery, but built precisely on the same plan—circular—and lighted *à la* Pantheon, heated by hot-water pipes "hermetically sealed." Below the upper gallery were small studios occupied by private pupils, of whom I can only remember one, the late Sir William Knighton, sent to the school by Wilkie, and afterwards an assistant of that great painter in some of the details of his works. Old students at Sass's, several of whom are living, will remember his description of the angle of forty-five degrees copied from the lighting of the Pantheon at Rome, the hermetical sealing of the water-pipes, and the rest of it, which he repeated to succeeding visitors, friends, or parents of pupils, always exactly in the same words; and how droll it was to hear him go through his first instructions to new pupils in precisely the same manner, words, intonation, everything, as he had administered them to yourself only a week or two before! Hogarth's well-known illustration of the power of single lines he invariably inflicted on the new proselyte at the moment he thought it most appropriate, always at the same point in a given lesson.

"Now to illustrate what I say, I shall draw a soldier, his gun, and his dog in three lines," and he proceeded to do it thus: "There is the public-house door," making a perpendicular line; "there is the man's gun," making a stroke at his favourite angle near the top of the door; "and there is the dog's tail," making a little curve near the bottom of the

straight line, ending his lecture always by the words, "Don't laugh; there is nothing to laugh at." This was invariably said, whether the student laughed or not.

Mr. Sass, like many other folks, had his peculiarities; he was somewhat passionate, and knowing that his passion, unless checked, would betray him into unseemly violence, he made it a rule to retire instantly from the cause of offence, and force himself to pause a few moments before he resented it, which he then did with dignified severity. To illustrate this, I recall an incident in which I unconsciously offended. An eclipse of the sun took place, and the young Sasses and I went on to the roof of the house by means of a trap-door, to look at the sun through bits of smoked glass. I was enjoying the sight, and at the same time breaking the tiles with my feet, when I was interrupted by what seemed to be a fearful oath. I looked down just in time to see the rapidly descending head of my master. I saw the cause of the explosion, and waited in trepidation for the return of the head. In about two minutes it slowly reappeared, and stopped where it was on a level with the broken tiles. "Did it strike you, Frith—it ought to have struck you, and if it had knocked you down I should have been pleased—that you were destroying the roof of my house in your absurd—— Henry!"—suddenly seeing his son's shoes had been also destructive—"why, you confound——" and down went the head again, and more calming time was required and taken, the

finale being an announcement that Henry's pocket-money should suffer for his misdoings, and my father's purse for mine. Reflection must have softened the ireful decision, for I never heard any more of it.

Sass's veneration for the antique amounted almost to worship, and anything like an insult—and a very small matter took that shape in his eyes—was fiercely resented. On one occasion I left some dirty paint-brushes on the plinth on which the Apollo stood. Sass threw them to the ground, and quietly told me "if such conduct occurred again, my immediate expulsion would follow." Though Mr. Sass was well-educated and a gentleman, he was, as I have shown, subject to attacks of excitement and irritability from influences sometimes so slight as to cause surprise in those who had unwittingly made him angry; his language then became curiously involved, ungrammatical, and often incomprehensible.

One of his pupils, a light-headed, careless young fellow, who had annoyed the master by his conduct, received a reprimand in the following words addressed to the whole school: "Gentlemen, I was at the lecture at the Royal Academy last night, where I met Wilkie, and he said to me, 'Sass, you could teach a stone to draw;' and so IT IS, but I can't teach that C—— anything."

On another occasion when he was instructing us in the true way of producing the harmony that should exist in works of art between the figures in a picture and their background, thinking he detected

a sneer on C——'s face, he said, turning to C——, and pointing to one of his own works, "You," with tremendous emphasis on the word, "won't believe *me;* perhaps you will believe Sir Thomas Lawrence, who said when he looked at that picture, 'What a wonderful "*harmonious!*" How is it produced?'"

Whilst I was in the school there were two expulsions: one in the person of a youth from Jersey, who, in spite of a notice in large letters always visible to him, that "Silence is indispensable in a place devoted to study," persisted in singing French songs in a piercingly shrill voice, and in laughing at Mr. Sass; and singing louder than ever when the professor disappeared. The other discharged student was my old friend Jacob Bell, so well known afterwards as the intimate and valued friend of Sir Edwin Landseer, the purchaser of so many of that great artist's works, and, I may add, of my "Derby Day," all eventually bequeathed by him to the National Gallery.

Bell went through the drawing from the flat with much tribulation, and at last began the fearful plaster ball, in the representation of which he had advanced considerably; but he also had arrived at the limit of his patience, and on one fatal Monday morning, after witnessing an early execution at Newgate, he drew the scaffold and the criminal hanging on it, in the centre of the ball. We were grouped round the artist listening to an animated account of the murderer's last moments when Sass appeared.

The crowd of listeners ran to their seats and

waited for the storm. Mr. Sass looked at the drawing, and went out of the studio—a pin might have been heard to drop. Bell looked round and winked at me. Sass returned, and walked slowly up to Mr. Jacob Bell, and addressed him as follows: "Sir, Mr. Bell; sir, your father placed you under my care for the purpose of making an artist of you. I can't do it; I can make nothing of you. I should be robbing your father *if I did it.* You had better go, sir; such a career as this," pointing to the man hanging, "is a bad example to your fellow-pupils. You must *leave, sir!*"

"All right," said Bell, and away he went, returning to the druggist's shop established by his father in Oxford Street, where he made a large fortune, devoting it mainly to the encouragement of art and artists, and dying prematurely, beloved and regretted by all who knew him.

It is reported of his father, a rigid Quaker, who watched with disapproval his son's purchases of pictures, that he said to him one day:

"What business hast thou to buy those things, wasting thy substance?"

"I can sell any of *those things* for more than I gave for them, some for twice as much."

"Is that verily so?" said the old man. "Then I see no sin in thy buying more."

When Bell first appeared at Sass's, he wore the Quaker coat; but finding that the students showed their disapproval in a marked and unpleasant manner—such, for instance, as writing "Quaker" in white

chalk across his back—he discarded that vestment, and very soon afterwards was himself discarded by the Quakers. His dismissal happened in this wise. At "meeting" the men sit on one side of the chapel, and the women on the other. Bell disliked this arrangement, and finding remonstrance of no avail, he disguised himself in female attire, and took his place in the forbidden seats. For a time all went well, but a guilty conscience came into play on seeing two of the congregation speaking together and eying him suspiciously the while; he took fright, and catching up his petticoats, he went out from "meeting" with a stride that proclaimed his sex. For this he was, as I have heard him tell many a time, expelled from the community.

To return once more to Sass's.

Besides the warning notice that had so little effect on the musical student, there were many other pieces of advice distributed around and about the gallery in motto fashion, one or two of which I particularly recollect: "Those models which have passed through the approbation of ages are intended for your imitation, and not your criticism;" "Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed;" "Laborare est orare," and so on. I don't think the motto system did us any good. Upon greater familiarity grew greater contempt, and the wise sayings lost their influence, if they ever had any. Very few of the contemporaries of my student-days have left any "footprints on the sands of time." Many of them died young; others, after becoming

students of the Royal Academy, drifted disappointed away from artistic life, into more congenial and profitable pursuits.

Edward Lear, afterwards well known as the author of a child's book called "A Book of Nonsense," was one who became an intimate friend of mine, as well as fellow-student. He is still living, I believe, somewhere in Italy. Lear was a man of varied and great accomplishments, a friend of Tennyson's, whose poetry he sang charmingly to music of his own composing. As a landscape-painter he had much merit; but misfortune in the exhibition of his pictures pursued him, as it has done so many others, and at last, I fear, drove him away to try his fortune elsewhere. There were two men named Savage, one very dark, the other very fair. We called the one black, and the other white, Savage. I cannot recall even the names of more than two others. The first—how much the first in all respects!—was Douglas Cowper, a fair, handsome, delicate youth who possessed powers which, if rapid consumption followed by death before he was twenty-one had not cut short his bright and happy life, would have speedily placed him in the first rank of his profession. His matchless application, his delight even in the driest parts of his training, and the rapidity of his improvement, were matters of envy and astonishment to all of us. He was the master's favourite pupil, and often held up to us in his presence as an example to Mr. C—— and others, amongst whom I must place myself. Cowper's course was very rapid.

He became a student of the Royal Academy, gained medals in all the schools, succeeded at once in painting pictures in which he displayed (of course in a comparatively immature manner) refinement, extreme sensibility to female beauty, appreciation of character —in short, every quality that can adorn a picture. Finding disease increase upon him, he went abroad, became worse, and returned home to die. The other, Benjamin Aplin Newman Green, my fellow indoor pupil, was as different from Cowper as it was possible for one human being to be from another. A good-natured, foolish creature, without the least ability as an artist; but a great worshipper of Byron, most of whose poems he could repeat by heart, to my sorrow, for our evenings were perforce nearly always spent together, and the study of Michael Angelo was difficult enough without constant interruptions from the "Corsair" and the "Bride of Abydos." Poor Green was the butt of the school. The more advanced students worked in the lower gallery, and no sooner did the monotonous tones of Green's voice reach us in the upper studio, than, armed with bread-crusts, we quietly descended the stairs, and before he had got further in his recitation than

> "O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
> Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,"

a shower of bread, crust or crumb, according to what was at our disposal (after using it for error-erasing in our drawings), put a temporary stop to the infliction. On one occasion I remember my own aim being diverted by the sudden apparition of the Pro-

fessor, who passed through the curtains of the passage at the moment of attack, and the result was a smart blow in the middle of the august waistcoat instead of the spot intended. I went back to my work and waited. In a minute Sass appeared in the upper gallery with the crust in his hand.

"Who did this?" said he.

"I threw it, sir; but it was not intended for you."

"For whom was it intended, sir?"

"For Mr. Green."

"Then never dare to presume to throw bread at me again. If I ever discover you guilty of such unexampled conduct, I will," etc., etc.

From Mr. Sass's family, with whom as indoor pupil I was in constant intercourse, I received the greatest kindness. Mrs. Sass was a mother to me in the best sense of the word; and it was a wondering pleasure to me to see so many of the great men of that day, whose like we shall not look upon again. I was sitting with the family in the drawing-room one evening, a little reading and music going on, when Mr. Wilkie was announced. Mr. Sass went to meet him, and tried to induce him to stay; but the great painter was not, or did not think himself, in presentable evening costume, and besides, he was in a great hurry. He was very tall, and wore a long blue cloak. The Sass family of course he knew, and I was pointed out to him as "one of my pupils who has just finished his drawing for the Academy."

"Varra weel," said Wilkie, the Scotch vernacular being very marked.

Mr. Sass was accustomed to give a series of conversazioni, at which great artists and other distinguished men were present. Etty, Martin (certainly one of the most beautiful human beings I ever beheld), and Constable were frequent visitors. We had dinners and dances, too. Who that had once seen Wilkie dance a quadrille could ever forget the solemnity of the performance! Every step was done with a conscientious precision that pointed to the recent dancing-master. "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well," seemed to be expressed in every movement; and then the courtly grace with which he bowed to his partner and led her to her seat! *Autre temps, autre mœurs.* We never see such sights nowadays.

I assisted at one memorable dinner. The guests were Eastlake, Constable, Wilkie, Etty—Chantry, I think—and others whom I forget. I sat between Eastlake and Constable. The only words addressed to me were by Eastlake, and they were to the effect that a sugar erection on the table near us was like a Grecian temple; didn't I think so? I was too frightened to reply. Wilkie talked a great deal, but quite over my head; and on the conversation turning upon how far ignorant opinion was valuable on pictures, Constable maintained that it was worthless, as he believed was Molière's housekeeper's judgment on literary work. To illustrate his opinion he gave the following example: A nobleman (whose name I forget) had commissioned Constable to paint a landscape of a beautiful part of the country sur-

rounding a certain castle, the seat of the noble lord. The picture was to be both a landscape and a portrait of the castle, and a large summer-house was allotted as a studio for the painter, who made many studies, and indeed painted one or two pictures from adjacent scenery. The walls of the summer-house had been newly covered with a gorgeous paper representing flowers, trees, rocks, etc. On this wall hung an empty gold frame, and Constable declared that the gardener, whose opinion he had asked upon his work generally, after making a variety of idiotic remarks, said, looking at the empty frame hanging on the wall—through which the wall-paper appeared as a picture—"*That's* a lovely pictur', sir; that's more finished, that is; more what I like."

Undoubtedly Constable was one of the greatest landscape-painters that ever lived, second only to Turner, the greatest of all. He was an embittered, disappointed man, and with reason; for whilst artists of far inferior talent sold their pictures readily and for large sums, Constable was neglected and unpopular. The works of a landscape and sea painter of great eminence, whose name I suppress, were sometimes open to the charge of a certain *putty*-like texture, and the fact that Constable had expressed his opinion that "Blank's" pictures were "like putty," reached the artist's ears; and upon some occasion soon after, when Constable praised a certain picture of his, "Blank" immediately retorted:

"Why, I am told you say my pictures are like putty!"

"Well," said Constable, "what of that? I like putty."

Constable died very suddenly in the year 1837. He had retired to rest in his usual health, and was found dead in the morning. I fear there are few men now living who can remember Dr. Herring's account of the effect of Constable's sudden death upon two painters named Wilkins, both very short, very stout men, who, to use Dr. Herring's words, "wore the calves of their legs in front," each possessing larger corporations than are commonly seen. They were pompous men, and carried their calves and their stomachs very much *en évidence*.

One of them painted pictures of dead game, and on Herring admiring a group of dead rabbits and praising the natural appearance of them, Wilkins said, in his loud, unctuous, pompous tone:

"*Nature*, sir. Yes, I flatter myself there is more nature in those rabbits than you *usually see* in rabbits."

One of the Wilkinses hearing of Constable's death, hurried home with the news. He walked up to his brother, their corporations almost meeting.

"William, what do you think?" giving his brother a butt with his stomach.

"I *don't* know," returning the push.

"*Constable's dead!*" a violent effort of corporation following, which sent the brothers for the moment a little back from each other.

"*Constable dead!*" said William in accents of incredulity and consternation, and with a tremendous return of the stomach charge.

"Yes!" with a butt.

"No!" with return butt. "Not *dead!*" butt.

"Yes, DEAD!" return butt.

And they continued exclaiming and butting at each other until their surprise and consternation ceased.

After my admission as a student of the Royal Academy—that is to say, after more than two years' hard work at drawing—I was allowed to take my first step in painting, and I returned to Sass's for that purpose. Here, again, the system was admirable. A simple antique model was put up before the student, who, provided with brushes, and black and white paint only on his palette, was told to copy it in monochrome. I date my first real pleasure in my work from that moment. After the tedious manipulation of Italian chalk, the working with the brush was delightful, and the result seemed so much more satisfactorily like the object imitated, than was possible by the former method. No sooner did I feel the fascination of the brush than I burned to try my hand at nature in some form or other. I begged to be permitted to paint a head from life. I was told I was just as fit to command the Channel Fleet as to paint a head from nature. "You would wreck the ships, sir, and you would only spoil good canvas if you had your will." So I was made to copy copies of the old masters, till I began to feel a dangerous and very rebellious spirit growing up within me, and at last I told my master I would *copy no more*. Oliver "asking for more" did not

produce a greater effect upon Mr. Bumble, than did my audacity on Mr. Sass. He could not trust himself to reply until the usual retirement had taken place. He then said very calmly, "You are too great a man for me; you want no more instruction; I am useless. I will write to your father and tell him there is no necessity for you to remain here any longer; your friends expect you to be a second Wilkie. I can't make Wilkies; and if I could, I should not make the experiment out of such material as you." This was disheartening, but I knew the good old fellow would not write to my father, and would soon forget all about my impertinence. The matter was compromised by my doing one copy more, and then being allowed to arrange and paint a group of still life.

My first attempt from nature still exists. It consists of a brown jar, a wicker Florence oil bottle, and an old inkstand.

I no longer regretted the easy life, or what I thought such, of the auctioneer. I felt real enjoyment in my work, a feeling which has possessed me from that day to this in ever-increasing strength. The Sass boys were handsome enough and patient enough for models, and from one of them I painted my first exhibited picture. I sent it to the British Gallery (then existing in Pall Mall under the name of the British Institution), and to my great delight my picture, which was called "A Page with a Letter," was *hung* at the *top* of the room. And what airs I gave myself! How superior I felt and looked to

those who had been less fortunate than myself! But I anticipate. Long before I could persuade my master to let me try my hand at his son, I had dreadful fights with him about the method I persisted in adopting, which was to go to the streets for any striking character I could persuade to place himself, or herself, under my "'prentice hand." Though I had painted many groups of still life, all of which had passed under the criticism of my master, he still insisted that I should paint a composition of still-life objects, ignoring all I had done. This forgetfulness seemed strange; indeed, it was one of the first signs of the mental trouble that afterwards terminated in insanity. Another sign of the near approach of that dreadful disease may be mentioned. The cartoons of Raphael were then preserved in one of the galleries at Hampton Court Palace; and it was a custom of Mr. Sass's to take a selection of his pupils by coach to the Palace, where he gave a sort of lecture in the presence of the cartoons. He always made us remove our hats on entering the room, and then in solemn tones, as if he were at church, he would expatiate on the wonders before him. I well remember the last journey I made to Hampton Court. It was on a beautiful summer's morning, and the students occupied all the outside seats of the coach; Sass sitting beside the coachman, I with my friend Abraham Solomon (a young man of great ability, who died early) sitting immediately behind our master and the coachman. Sass talked incessantly,

to the amusement of the coachman, who evidently attributed his excitement to a common cause. We, who knew the Professor's temperate habits too well to be able to account for it in that way, soon had a proof that our more terrible suspicions were only too well grounded. Sass suddenly turned to Solomon and said :

" Why don't you wear a Gibus hat ?"

Solomon had never thought of doing so, and said he " didn't see why he should."

" *Why !*" said poor Sass. " I'll soon tell you *why*. You can put it into your pocket when you have done with it ; if you sit upon it you can't hurt it ; you just touch a spring and it shuts up. They are first-rate things, and I shall never wear any other."

On this particular day Mr. Sass wore a white beaver, about as unlike a Gibus as it could possibly be. Solomon then said :

" Well, sir, then why don't you wear one yourself ?"

" I do," said Sass ; " this is one. Do you doubt it ? I see you do. Then just look here. Coachman, get up a moment." The coachman got up as desired, and the hat was placed on his seat. He sat down upon it and split it in every direction. " There," said Sass, " I hope you are satisfied that I do wear a Gibus." And wear his so-called Gibus he did the rest of the day in its battered condition, and became a laughing-stock in consequence.

After seeing the cartoons, it was the custom to go upon the river, and on this occasion our master

wished to dispense with a waterman, and row us himself. This we declined, so he refused to go with us, and insisted on having a boat to himself; and in spite of our remonstrance and opposition, the adventurous oarsman pushed off, and though it was evident he had never attempted rowing before, he managed to paddle his boat into the middle of the stream, where its motions became so eccentric and alarming, that its poor tenant grew frightened, and called out loudly for help, which speedily reached him.

Soon after this, more unmistakable evidences of a disturbed mind showed themselves, such, for instance, as his ordering great quantities of goods—for which he could have no possible use—from various unsuspecting tradesmen, strangers to him; and his purchasing quite a collection of atrociously bad pictures blocking up the passages and staircases of his house with these and all sorts of other utterly unnecessary articles. One more most convincing and melancholy sign of the sad affliction that had come upon him occurred one evening. He was sitting over the fire with an old friend, who told him a very good story, which, for the instant, he seemed capable of thoroughly appreciating and enjoying; but after a few minutes had elapsed, apparently quite forgetful of when and where he had heard it, he told the same story over again, as something entirely fresh, to the friend who had only just recounted it to him. Almost immediately after this incident, restraint became compulsory, and "The School

of Art, Bloomsbury," under Mr. Sass's management, closed for ever.

Before finally taking leave of Mr. Sass, I desire to bear testimony to his great qualities as a teacher, and to his amiable disposition as a man. Personally, I feel I owe everything to him and his teaching; and there are some of my brother Academicians now living who, I feel sure, would endorse my verdict on our dear old teacher.

CHAPTER V.

THE LIFE SCHOOL.

THOUGH I would gladly have bid adieu to antique drawing, I found that if I desired to reach the upper school at the R.A., where painting was taught, I could only do so by *drawings* which must meet the approval of the Council. I succeeded, after several futile attempts, in achieving these; and then I was permitted to draw in the Life School. There, the whole thing was delightful to me. The Academicians were visitors—one of the august Forty sitting with us the prescribed two hours, rarely drawing, oftener reading. In those days scarcely ever *teaching*. How different to the present "manners and customs"! The Life School, or in other words the school of the nude model, was at that time held in what the students called the "pepper-box," namely, the centre cupola of the now National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. It was a circular room, and the model was posed on one side of it—an extended semicircle of students working opposite. Dead silence reigned. Strange scenes sometimes occurred. Some of our models were splendid guardsmen. One named Brunskill was

a special favourite, from his magnificent physique, and his extraordinary endurance of painful attitudes. He was usually perfectly sober, because he knew well that one lapse from that condition would put an end to his career as a Royal Academy model.

I well remember his last appearance. He was late—a great sin in a model—and, what was worse, he had evidently been drinking. His attitude was that of a sailor pushing a boat from the shore. He had a heavy oar, with which he thrust against an impediment meant to represent a rock.

I was almost under the man, and had a very difficult piece of foreshortening to contend with, and was doing my best to master it, when the model said:

"I can't do it. I ain't fit to do it. This 'ere thing what I hold ain't right. Nothing's right; so I wish you gentlemen good-night. There now!"

It was "good-night" to us, and "good-bye" to Brunskill, for he was never allowed to sit again. Some months after this, when Mr. Jones, R.A., was visitor, an incident occurred which may interest my readers—if I ever have any. (*Par parenthèse*, I may say of Mr. Jones that he was chiefly known as a painter of military pictures, and in dress and person he so much resembled the great Duke of Wellington, that, to his extreme delight, he was often mistaken for that hero, and saluted accordingly. On this coming to the ears of the Duke, he said: "Dear me. Mistaken for me, is he? That's strange, for no one ever mistakes me for Mr. Jones.")

This anecdote was told by me to my old friend Edmund Yates, who relates it in his delightful reminiscences.

But to return to the Jones incident. A female model was the sitter, and was placed with her back to the students, half leaning, half reclining, in an attitude full of grace. I had arrived late, and was compelled to take the only vacant seat at the end of the semicircle, from which I had a view of the model's profile. The face was new to me; the attitude seemed a very easy one. I was therefore surprised to see tears slowly falling down the model's cheek. I thought I ought to draw the attention of the visitor to the fact, and did so. "Oh no!" said Mr. Jones; "she can't be in pain; no. I think I know what distresses her. Take no notice. Go on with your work."

The next night the sitting was repeated, but the tears were not, and I thought little more about the matter. A few months after this, a very modest, respectable-looking girl was sent to me by a friend as a model, and I engaged her at once for a picture I had just commenced. I found the girl was the daughter of a tailor in a very small way of business, and that she was in every particular a thoroughly respectable person. It was not till after two or three sittings, and on looking again and again at her profile, that it struck me that I had seen the tears coursing each other down it in the Life School.

"Surely, Miss B——, I cannot be mistaken; you sat for Mr. Jones at the Royal Academy?" She

blushed terribly, and the tears came again. "Now tell me why you did such a thing?"

"I did it," said she, "to prevent my father going to prison. He owed three pounds ten, and if he couldn't have paid it by that Saturday night, he was to be arrested. The Academy paid me three guineas for the week, and saved him. I never sat in that way before, and I never will again;" and I believe she never did.

She is at the present time in a position of life far beyond anything she could have aspired to. She is a mother and a grandmother, and no one has any idea that she sat for the nude figure to save her father from prison. I desire to say as little as possible on a disagreeable subject; but attempts have been made now and again to prevent the study of the female nude. If the well-meaning objectors knew half as much as I do of the subject, they would hesitate before they charge a small section of the community with immorality, which exists only in the imagination of the accusers. I declare I have known numbers of *perfectly respectable* women who have sat constantly and habitually for the nude, and if even it were unfortunately otherwise, we painters could not do without them. Many men draw every figure naked in their compositions before they clothe them. I did so for years, and ought to do so now. Then, again, if the nude female figure had always been denied to artists, such statues as the Venus of Milo—the delight and wonder of the world—could not have been executed. Numbers of great works of

the old and modern masters would never have seen the light, and generations of their worshippers would have been deprived of exquisite pleasure and untold improvement.

One more little story of the Life School, and I have done with it. Sir Edwin Landseer was visitor —the only instance of his filling the office in my time. He was a very fashionable personage, and we all rather wondered at seeing him willing to spend evenings, usually devoted to high society, in the service of the Life School. He read the whole time, and one evening a very old gentleman in list slippers, with a speaking-trumpet under his arm, shuffled into the school. This was John Landseer, an eminent engraver, an Associate of the Academy, and father of Edwin Landseer, whom he greatly resembled. His son rose to meet him with the book he had been reading in his hand.

"You are not drawing then; why don't you draw?" said the old man, in a loud voice.

"Don't feel inclined," shouted the son down the trumpet.

"Then you ought to feel inclined. That's a fine figure; get out your paper and draw."

"Haven't got any paper," said the son.

"What's that book?" said the father.

"'Oliver Twist,'" said Edwin Landseer, in a voice loud enough to reach Trafalgar Square.

"Is it about art?"

"No; it's about Oliver Twist."

"Let me look at it. Ha! it's some of Dickens's

nonsense, I see. You'd much better draw than waste your time upon such stuff as that."

This amused the students, who tittered, and deepened the frowns that had been gathering through the interview on the brow of the great animal-painter, and added to the strained condition that already existed between him and the students; for Landseer nearly always came late, and kept us waiting outside the door of the school, whilst he was placing the model, in what we thought a purposely aggravating way. The night after the interview I have related, the delay outside was so prolonged that we stamped and knocked in the manner common to a crowd waiting in the gallery of a theatre for the actors to appear.

The result of this riotous proceeding was, that in obedience to a written order posted up in the hall on the next evening, we were compelled to remain below till a bell summoned us to mount the numberless stairs to the "pepper-box." Which of the students was guilty of writing the word "Humbug" in large capitals across the obnoxious order I never knew, nor indeed did I know that it had been done, till Mr. Jones, who was then keeper of the Academy and the head of all the schools, walked into the Life School with the order in his hand. He took his place with his back to the model, and addressed us thus: "Gentlemen—I use that word in addressing you collectively, but there is one person amongst you who has no claim to the appellation—I hold in my hand evidence of vulgar insubordination. I am

sorry to think that an act which must have been witnessed by some of you, was not prevented before it was perpetrated. I seek not, gentlemen, to discover the author of this insult, for if I knew him, it would be my painful duty to pursue him to his expulsion," etc.

Landseer lived at least thirty years after this, but was never visitor again. About this time two young men became students of the Academy, who were destined to play very prominent parts in the world. John Phillip, who became an Academician, and one of the finest painters of the English or any other school; and Richard Dadd, his intimate friend and future brother-in-law, a man of genius that would assuredly have placed him high in the first rank of painters, had not a terrible affliction darkened one of the noblest natures and brightest minds that ever existed, and eventually put an end to all the hopes that were entertained for his future. I cannot go into details that would be distressing to me to relate, and to the survivors of my unhappy friend to read. Suffice it to say that the noble mind is destroyed, though the body still survives. I would rather recall Dadd as I knew him in the happy days of long ago, when he and Phillip, O'Neil, Elmore, Ward, Egg (all gone!), and some others, formed a band of followers full of the spirit of emulation, love for our art and one another. As to jealousy of each other, I can truly say the feeling never crossed my mind, nor do I believe it existed amongst us at all. We met together

constantly, formed a sketching club, criticised and abused each other's works whenever we thought they deserved chastisement. We were not in the least a mutual admiration society, like that which is said to exist amongst a certain class at the present time.

I must now return to the period when I entered the Life Academy, and found my friend Douglas Cowper at work there. He was far in advance of me in every way, and had already begun to paint subjects, illustrations of Scott and Shakespeare; and what was most wonderful to me, the pictures were sold!—for very small prices, certainly; but they *were* sold.

"Why don't you give up painting heads," said he to me, "and try your hand at a composition of two or three figures?"

"Because I should make a mess of it," said I; and as I made a very deplorable mess of a composition which I attempted many months afterwards—having in the meantime gone through a course of portrait-painting—I should only have disgusted myself beyond endurance by so premature an effort as Cowper proposed.

CHAPTER VI.

PRACTICE IN PORTRAIT-PAINTING.

I HAD quitted Sass's for good, and was practising, I still think, in the right way, viz., by painting anyone whom I could persuade to sit to me; and amongst those who had patience to go through this ordeal were my uncle and aunt Scaife, and several of their friends. That anybody would be fool enough to pay money for my performances never entered my mind; but to my delight one day an old gentleman, who had seen a portrait of one of my uncle's friends, offered me five pounds if I would make as good a likeness of him as I had done of my other victim. I tried, succeeded, and received my first money reward for "work and labour done." This old gentleman's daughter was governess in a family in Lincolnshire, and the owner of the family, happening to be in London, saw the portrait of his governess's father, and was so struck with the likeness that he asked me if I could go to his house to paint himself, and "others, he had no doubt, would follow suit"—price five pounds for a head, ten for a kit-cat, fifteen for a half-length—always the size of

life. I started full of hope and interest, and found myself in the midst of most agreeable society, welcomed everywhere, and with as much work as I could do. The way of it was this: I went from house to house, chiefly among the higher class of gentlemen farmers, staying as long as my work lasted; sometimes flirting with the young ladies, who thought painting "oh, such a beautiful art!" flattering their mothers—in their portraits, I mean—and, I verily believe, making myself a general favourite everywhere.

"Pickwick" was being published at this time in monthly parts, taking the town and country by storm; and as each number appeared—to beguile the tedium of the sitting—it was read by the wife of one of my sitters, who was a jolly portly man, not unlike Mr. Pickwick himself. Mrs. N—— (the wife) was a very serious lady indeed, religious, I believe, in the truest sense of the word; but certainly a very depressing person, without a particle of fun, or the least sense of humour, in her composition. Anything funnier, however, than her reading of "Pickwick" could not be conceived. Every sentence was uttered in precisely the tones she used when she read morning and evening prayers, and I need scarcely say that that method of elocution, excellent as it was for the one purpose, became ludicrous in the extreme when adopted for the other. If my reader will take the trouble to imagine the following speech of Mr. Weller's—"You would change your note if you know'd who was near you, as the hawk remarked to hisself

with a cheerful laugh as he heard the robbing red breast a-singing round the corner"—delivered in the manner affected by the severest of the Low Church clergymen, an idea may be formed of the result upon me, and even upon my jolly sitter, whose solemn "Amen" after it I can never forget.

After finishing my work at the N——s', I betook myself, bag and baggage, to a neighbouring farm-house, where fresh faces awaited my attention. The Grange was a large farm, held under Lord Yarborough by a Mr. F——, who possessed a pretty little wife and a small old mother-in-law, whose characteristic countenance made me long to paint it.

In her youth, Mrs. B——, who was the widow of a bluff sea captain of Hull, had been a great beauty. She was now very old, and amongst other eccentricities had a habit of thinking aloud, and invariably on the same subject—personal appearance. Very embarrassing, because any new face was sure to produce an immediate criticism, favourable or the reverse. I arrived very late at the Grange, and was shown into the drawing-room, where a young clergyman was reading prayers, and the visitors and family were kneeling in various directions. The old lady was allowed to pray sitting, seemingly; and when I appeared and immediately knelt down with the rest, she interrupted the clergyman by some words which I did not catch, but judging from the shaking of several of the worshippers' shoulders, and the great difficulty the reader had in going on with the service, they evidently were of a droll tendency.

It was not till the next day that Mr. F—— explained the situation. The fact was that no sooner did the old lady catch sight of me, than she exclaimed: "Well! *he's* no beauty."

She was an amusing sitter. With regard to her own portrait, she was only anxious that a large miniature likeness of her husband, which she wore as a brooch, should be faithfully rendered. "Oh, mister!" she said; "you haven't caught the Captain's eye. It was a *beautiful blue*, not like *that;* THAT'S GREEN!"

She was, however, quite content with my rendering of her own delightful old face—her cheeks streaked like a winter apple; and she was apparently quite indifferent to the departed loveliness of her youth. Very unlike, in that respect, many old ladies I have painted since, most of whom have seemed possessed with the idea that time had stood still for fifty years; and that the face over which seventy or eighty summers and winters had passed, was very much the same as the one with which they were familiar in their teens. I could furnish proofs of what I have just written that would startle the incredulous as much as the facts startled me. Among my sitters in those days was an old clergyman, whose daughters were most anxious that his portrait should be painted. He had been a chaplain in the navy, and—singular perhaps for a parson—always wore a long blue coat, buttoned to the throat; the black ribbon of his pince-nez meandering across a chest puffed and smooth, in unmistakable imitation of George IV.

He was very old, and very upright—of a spare tall figure. A Sir Charles Grandison in courtesy, but hated sitting with an intensity I have rarely seen equalled.

I believe that the fight that went on between his desire to please his daughters and his dislike of sitting, shortened his life. He was of a bilious temperament, and after he had been sitting a short time, a flush spread over his face, succeeded by a yellow patchiness (between both of which I had to steer a middle course), plainly showing a painfully disturbed condition of his system. To amuse him, I placed a large looking-glass in such a position as to enable him to see each touch as it was put on. I was hard at work at the blue coat, the plain pigeon-breasted appearance of which I was modifying by a few creases, when I saw my sitter give a violent tug at the front of the garment. I went on with my creases, however, successfully as I thought, breaking up the mass of monotonous blue, until the old gentleman, apparently unable to bear it any longer, jumped up and came behind me, exclaiming: "My dear sir, I never, *never* wear my coat like that! I could not endure such a coat—it does not fit me! Pray remove those marks!"

And removed they were, and the coat is creaseless to this day. I spent four months at that time painting portraits in Lincolnshire—in fact, I remained as long as I could find any work to do, constantly receiving letters from my artist friends in London, giving glowing accounts of the Exhibi-

tion of 1839 (opened during my absence), and bestowing anathemas on myself for remaining away from the scene of those glories, and the successes of my particular friends, notably of Cowper and O'Neil, both of whom had exhibited pictures which had found purchasers.

Looking back, I feel that I not only did not lose time, but improved it by my Lincolnshire practice. No better preparation could be imagined for a man whose powers enable him to cope successfully with the lower or the higher branches of art, than the careful study of nature and character that portrait-painting ensures. I have seen several of my performances since they were painted, and what surprised me, and still surprises me, is the curious difference in the merits of works done in consecutive order. I find some quite exceptionally well done for so young a hand—good in drawing, colour, and character—others bad in every respect; but I have the satisfaction of feeling that in every instance I endeavoured to do my best, and undoubtedly I gained greatly by the experience. My work generally became much improved, and I would impress upon the young student the desirability of similar practice when attainable.

CHAPTER VII.

"POSTING" FROM HARROGATE TO LONDON.

I AM perfectly ignorant of the principles of literary composition. "Ignorance is bliss," they say; it may be, but I have never been able to taste the rapture that condition of mind is said to engender—indeed, I am suffering from the misery of it at this moment. To those who have accompanied me thus far in my reminiscences, my confession of incompetence is needless; but I plead it in excuse for the introduction in this place of matter that I fancy should have appeared before. With this short prelude in the shape of excuse, I have to say that in the year 1837 my father came to London, and stopped at my uncle Scaife's hotel, as usual. He was a great sufferer from asthma; and influenza being at that time very prevalent, he was attacked by it, and died after a few days' illness. I felt his loss very bitterly, for, as so often happens, under a somewhat gruff manner there beat a warm and tender heart; he was a kind and loving father, and his loss at the comparatively early age of sixty was a lasting grief to his widow and children. So soon as my mother

could find a tenant for the Dragon Hotel—of which my father had recently become owner as well as landlord—she prepared to leave Harrogate for London, so as to make a home for her sons, whose professions (law and art) rendered a residence in London imperative. I may premise that for many years my mother had been a terrible sufferer from rheumatic gout; entire loss of the use of her limbs being the result. There were no railways between York and London; a night and day journey in a stage-coach presented such a picture of misery, and perhaps injury, to the invalid as to necessitate some other mode of conveyance. There was nothing for it but to "post" all the way to London. A large carriage was procured, with an ample roof for luggage, and a "rumble" behind. Well do I remember the packing (piling, rather) of that tremendous luggage! When a mountain of moderate dimensions had been erected, there still remained a large hair-trunk.

"Where on earth is that to go? There is no room for it up there," said I to one of the packers—an old servant, who had known me from a child.

"Oh, there's plenty of room up in the allyment," said Seth, and up into the element went the trunk, nearer to the stars than it had ever been before.

Then came the scarcely less difficult packing of my mother. That accomplished, my sister and, I think, a maid being inside, and I in the rumble behind with a Yorkshire housemaid, we started on our long journey southwards. We were driven by easy

stages—fifteen miles, more or less, at a stretch—when with fresh horses and post-boys we continued our travel. I very soon found I was mistaken for a footman; my homely appearance and my position in the rumble may partly account for the misconception; and I very likely favoured it by my readiness to alight at each stage, in seeing after fresh horses, and in making myself more or less useful in attaching them to the carriage. If I had any doubt of my mistaken identity, it was put to rest by the third post-boy, who, after using bad language to me because I did not buckle some strap or other properly, called out to me, "Here, you just stand by the 'orses 'eads while I go and get just a nip at the bar;" and there I stood. And when my friend rejoined me, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he informed me that "There was no house on the road where you could get a better glass of 'srub' than the Black Bear; and now just give us a leg up, will you?"

I confess I enjoyed my domestic position very much, and took advantage of it often during our journey. My dear mother first frowned when I touched my hat to her, and then laughed and assisted in the fun—giving me fictitious orders, and then scolding and threatening me for forgetting them.

At one place where we changed horses, our new attendant was a very old post-boy—a figure quite strange to the present generation. He wore an old white hat, a weather-stained jacket that had once

been blue, buckskin breeches "all too wide for his shrunk shanks," and boots that had seen better days. I led one of his horses from the stable, and tried to back it into its proper place in front of the carriage. The animal, wiser than the post-boys, knew that I was an impostor, and refused to be directed by me. He backed against the carriage-door. My mother screamed and scolded, and the old post-boy roared in stentorian tones that I thought ought to have shaken him to pieces:

"Hold there, will you! What are you a-doing of? Bring her here, can't you?"

I meekly obeyed, and resigned my charge to her master, who speedily placed her in her proper position.

"I should say you was a indoor servant. Don't know nothing about osses, eh?" said the old man.

"Yes," I said; "my work is mostly indoors. I am not accustomed to horses much."

"Then why couldn't you let 'em alone? You'd no call to meddle. You'd a been right served if she'd kicked you."

As we approached nearer to London, the delusion became, if possible, more pronounced.

"Won't the ladies alight and take some refreshment?" said a man, apparently the landlord of the inn at which we were changing horses.

The notion of my mother alighting amused me, and I went to the carriage-window, and giving my hat the footman-touch that I knew so well, I said:

"The landlord desires to know if your grace will alight and take some refreshment."

"Go along, you naughty boy!" said my mother. "Tell him we haven't eaten half the provisions we brought with us."

To the landlord I said respectfully:

"Her ladyship is not very well, and would rather not alight."

"Humbug!" said the landlord. "Jemmy"—to the post-boy—"mind how you go round the corner after you pass the bridge as you go into ——" (some town, the name of which escapes me), "or you'll upset 'em, as you did the judge you took to the assizes, you know."

"Oh, ah! I'll mind," said the post-boy.

Now whether those directions to our driver conveyed masked orders for our destruction or not (in consequence of her grace refusing to alight) will ever remain a mystery. The landlord's directions made me very uneasy, and when the distant bridge came into view across the top of the carriage—or rather on one side of it—and the post-horse pace was rapidly increased till it became exceedingly like a gallop, I felt that the last moments of all of us (except the post-boy) might be alarmingly near. Now we are on the bridge; we approach the corner; the carriage sways sideways past it, all but over; we are safe at the Bridge Inn. This was too much for my mother. She called the driver to the carriage, and rated him soundly. "How dared he drive in that furious way!" etc., etc.

"It's the osses, mum; I can't hold 'em. Bless you! they knows like Christians they're a-nearing home, and their grub's a-waiting for 'em. I couldn't stop 'em; but you're all right. Why, t'other day we'd a upset, but nobody wasn't hurt, and perhaps you wouldn't a been neither."

"Go away," said my mother, "and send the next driver to me."

That person received a warning that if he pursued anything like the mad career of his predecessor, he would be mulcted of the threepence a mile that the post-boy usually received for himself.

One more wayside experience as a footman, and I take off my phantom livery. As we drove up to an inn, not many miles from London, I could see from my perch in the rumble that it was blessed with a remarkably pretty barmaid. From my youth up I have been, and ever shall be, sensible to the charm of female beauty; and I think one glance at the barmaid was enough to make her acquainted with that fact, sensible as she must have been of her own attractions. Besides, was I not a fellow-servant? I was young, so was she, though a little older than myself. At that time I despised any girl *younger* than myself; *now* I am of a different opinion. I talked to my mother at the carriage-window for a moment, with a very bright eye on the bar-window. Good gracious, she beckons me!

"I feel so thirsty, mother."

"Well, dear, go into the house and get some-

thing; and here, take this bottle and get it filled with the best sherry they have."

I went to the bar.

"Now, young man, what can I do for you?"

What a question! She was prettier near than at a distance.

"What will you take—what is it to be?" said the pretty barmaid; and she kindly added, "Whoever changes horses here, the orders is to give the servant a glass of anything they like best."

"Oh, thank you!" said I. "I think I will take a glass of—of——"

"Try the 'srub,'" said the barmaid.

"What is 'srub'?" said I. (I really did not know.)

"Oh, come, that's a good un! you pretend you don't know what 'srub' is! There, that's it. Down with it; it will do you good after your journey. Come a long way?"

The "srub" nearly choked me—filthy stuff—rum, I think.

"Will you be so good as to fill this bottle with the best sherry you have got?" said I.

"Ain't got any best," said the barmaid; "it's all best in this house. There you are; six shillings, please. Going to London?" inquired the lady.

"Yes."

"Ah, I wish I was going with you!" said the barmaid. (I am afraid I devoutly wished she was.) "I've never been to London; have you?"

"Yes," said I.

Here we were interrupted by our new post-boy, who said :

" Now, young fellow, your missis wants to know if you are going to stand there jabbering all day. It's my opinion you'll have to look out for another situation if you don't mind what you're about."

We resumed our journey, and in due time arrived at my uncle's house in Brook Street—not the hotel, but at a private house in Upper Brook Street, to which he had retired from business in easy competence. We were most kindly received, and there we remained till a house could be found for us. After much searching, we found in No. 11, Osnaburgh Street, a house that suited us in all respects save one—there was no decent painting-room. But I made the best of a small back parlour, in which I painted my first composition, and in which I passed some of the happiest hours of my life ; and to that small studio (with many apologies for this interruption to my narrative) I now return.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT "SUBJECT-PICTURES."

I DETERMINED to try my hand at what we called "a subject-picture." My admiration of Cowper led me into unconscious imitation of his manner, and after throes unutterable, I produced a small composition of two lovers—a reminiscence of a little *affaire de cœur* of my own. The lady was represented listening to vows, that were as sincere as I could make them appear, from a gentleman in a Spanish costume fresh from the masquerade-shop.

The picture was sent to the Liverpool Exhibition, and sold for fifteen pounds. It was long before I could reconcile myself to the idea of being paid for a portrait; but that any idiot could be found who would give fifteen golden sovereigns for a child of my imagination, astounded and delighted me, and at the same time urged me to further effort. As I have said earlier in this narrative, I was a great reader of Scott. With his novels I was very familiar, less so with his poetry. I read much of the poetry, however, with a view to a picture, and

fixed upon a scene from the "Lay of the Last Minstrel"—selecting the following passage for illustration:

> "Full slyly smiled the observant page,
> And gave the withered hand of Age
> A goblet crowned with rosy wine."

A much-needed refreshment for the old man as he proceeds with his long-winded narrative to the Duchess.

It was necessary, of course, to get an old and, if possible, a *bearded* model; but the latter in those days it was almost *im*possible to find, as an account given later in these reminiscences of my search after that then rare individual will show. I knew far too little of perspective, and consequently the relative sizes of the old man and the page puzzled me frightfully; sometimes their figures were tumbling over each other, and sometimes they were slipping out of the picture. Do what I would, I could not make their feet stand flat on the floor. The boy had a stupid giggle on his face, and stood upon his toes. The old man's beard insisted on looking as if he had tied it on, and its annoying owner nearly drove me wild with his remarks; and the girl who sat for the page said, "She never see such a face; it wasn't like *her*, *she* knew." Indeed it was not, nor like any earthly thing. How well I remember throwing down palette and brushes, and rushing out of the house in despair, and wandering about Chalk Farm where pigeon-shooting was going on, watching the pigeons as they were knocked over,

almost envying their fate! After rubbings out and alterations innumerable, the picture was finished. O'Neil and poor Cowper came, smiled, and said nothing. My old master told me flatly I should never do anything as long as I lived, and that all his hard work to make an artist of me had been thrown away. This was inspiriting! However, I sent the "Last Minstrel" to the Suffolk Street Gallery, and it was hung among other specimens of imbecility. The whole exhibition was frightfully criticised in the newspapers, and if I were not selected for especial abuse, it was evident, I thought, that I was not worthy of notice.

In spite of the practice I had had in portrait-painting, I still felt great difficulty in painting flesh; and I therefore made many more studies from life, in the hope of the improvement that was long a-coming.

Soon after I ventured on another and larger composition of figures, the subject being from Scott's "Heart of Midlothian," and the scene the interior of the church, with Madge Wildfire dragging Jeanie Deans up the centre aisle, to the amazement of the congregation. This was considered to be a great advance on the "Last Minstrel," and, indeed, it might be an advance without going very far; but there was really much more promise, and more performance too, than could have been expected from the miserable shortcomings of the previous work. "Madge Wildfire" also figured on the walls of Suffolk Street, and I received some compliments on

the varnishing-day which greatly elated me, and, what was better, nerved me for future work.

My next attempt was on the principle of "fools rushing in where angels fear to tread," a subject from Shakespeare—"Othello and Desdemona"—and the moment chosen was when Othello takes the pretty broad hint that Desdemona gives him, and declares his love—"Upon this hint I spake." My Othello was painted from an East Indian crossing-sweeper, and Desdemona from my sister; the result being a resemblance to the models from whom I drew the characters, and none whatever to the characters that Shakespeare drew. This picture came into my hands many years afterwards, when I cut off Othello's legs as well as the lady's, and repainted the whole thing; having reduced the size of the picture considerably, but I hope added a little to its value. At the present time Cambridge has the honour of possessing this work, where it hangs among a collection presented to the Fitzwilliam Museum. I respectfully wish the Museum joy of it. I sent "Othello" to the British Gallery, accompanied by "Rebecca and Ivanhoe." The "Othello" was hung in a good place; the "Rebecca," a much better picture rejected; being the only picture I have ever had rejected from any exhibition.

No artist can forget the first notice of him by the press. At any rate, I shall always remember the first public criticism on a picture of mine. In the *Art Journal*, then called the *Art Union*, appeared

a few lines of commendation, ending with, "The young painter has given proof that he thinks whilst he labours."

I well remember attending a lecture given by Haydon in the Suffolk Street Galleries, in which he told us one or two interesting things—one on the subject of public criticism. Wilkie's first exhibited picture was the "Village Politicians." Haydon, Jackson, and he were intimate friends and fellow-students. On the day after the Private View at the Royal Academy, Haydon having work of his own in the Exhibition, "rushed," as he expressed it, for the morning papers, where he found a favourable notice of Wilkie's "Village Politicians." He "rushed" to Wilkie's modest lodging in Sol's Row, Hampstead Road. He and Jackson tore into the room where Wilkie was at breakfast, and roared:

"Wilkie, my boy, your name is in the paper!"

"No! *really?*" replied Wilkie; and then the three danced hand in hand round the breakfast-table.

Wilkie's "No! *really?*" became so ludicrously frequent in his conversation that Haydon determined to try to break him of the habit, and in course of a conversation one day in which "No! really?" had cropped up with provoking frequency, Haydon said:

"Now, Wilkie, you mustn't mind my telling you of a habit of yours which is causing people to laugh at you. To whatever is said to you, you give but one reply, the two words, "No! really?"

"*No! really?*" replied Wilkie.

In this lecture Haydon gave us some advice direct from Vandyke. A very old lady, said he, who had sat for her portrait to Vandyke in her youth, sat to Hudson, Reynolds's master, in her old age. She complained of the darkness of her complexion as rendered by Hudson, and told that artist "That Vandyke's complexions were very different, as much too pale," in her opinion, "as Hudson's were too dark." In passing through Vandyke's gallery at Blackfriars, in which were many pale pictures, she asked "why he had painted with such fresh, pale colours?"

"Because," said Vandyke, "I have to allow for the darkening effect of time."

Of the truth of this story there could be no doubt, for Hudson told it to Reynolds; Reynolds to Northcote—his pupil—Northcote to Haydon; and Haydon to us. Poor Haydon! for whose genius I feel great respect, and for whose sad fate profound pity. I knew very little of him personally, but I may tell here of a kind act of encouragement to myself. I had painted and exhibited at the British Gallery a little picture of "Dolly Varden" (of which more afterwards, as it was the happy cause of a friendship with Dickens, terminated only by his death); and on going home one afternoon I found my mother in a great state of excitement with an address-card in her hand. She showed it to me without a word, and I read the name of B. R. Haydon. He had left a message with our servant to the effect that he would like to see me after

seeing "Dolly Polly What's-her-name," as he called her, in the Exhibition. He wanted to talk to me about the picture, "which you must tell him I admired. Now, you won't forget, there's a good girl." On the following Sunday I presented myself at Haydon's, and found him with two immense cartoons before him, intended for the competition for the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. One represented the expulsion from Paradise, the other the entry of the Black Prince into London, with King John of France as prisoner. Haydon did not remember my name, and it was not till I mentioned the "Dolly" and his call in Osnaburgh Street that he recovered from his surprise at a strange young man calling upon him. He was then most kind, gave me excellent technical advice, and prophesied for me a prosperous career if I could but guard myself against certain pernicious practices, that seemed likely to be as popular then, as other dangerous, foolish, and ignorant views of the real end and aim of art are now. I thought the cartoons very fine, and said so. "Glad you like them," said Haydon; and then pointing to a figure of the Devil, who was drawn watching the expulsion of Adam and Eve with an awful smile of satisfaction, "That is intended for Satan; do you think it like him?"

When the time comes for me to notice the cartoon competition, I shall have to speak of Haydon again; but now I must return to my own career. In the year 1840 I exhibited my first Academy picture,

the subject was "Malvolio, cross-gartered before the Countess Olivia." In the same Exhibition was Maclise's picture of the same subject, now in the National Gallery—of which it is, I think, an ornament; where mine is, I know not, but it could scarcely be considered an ornament anywhere.

I had no influence to aid me in getting the picture exhibited, but my friend Williamson, the porter, promised to let me know if I were successful, and when a pencil note arrived in Osnaburgh Street from the hand of Williamson, saying simply, "Sir, you are hung *safte*," there was joy amongst the Frith family, and we had oysters for supper.

With a beating heart I waited for the opening of the Exhibition. I went hurriedly through the rooms, and could see nothing of my picture. Presently I saw Williamson, who read my anxiety in my face. "You're all right, sir; come here and I'll show you;" and he took me into the Architecture Room, and pointed out Malvolio's yellow stockings at the tip-top of the room.

Could that dirty-looking thing, that seemed as if ink had been rubbed all over it, be my bright picture? There was no mistake about that, but how changed! To the uninitiated it would be impossible to conceive the change that appears to come over a picture when surrounded by others in a public exhibition, and subject to the glare of unaccustomed lights and the glitter of gold frames, with the ruinous reflections from all sides. A story is told of an artist who sent to the Royal Academy a half-length portrait

of an Admiral; it was his first exhibit, and being a very excellent picture, was placed on the line in one of the best rooms, and flanked by pictures of Academicians on each side. In early days the Royal Academicians had varnishing-days, but denied them to outsiders. One of the Academicians, who found himself, or rather his picture, to be the immediate neighbour of the Admiral, was, or thought he was, terribly damaged by the bright blue coat and realistic gold epaulets of the naval warrior. All his efforts to "paint-up" to the destructive picture were unavailing, so he took a full brush of glazing colour and *toned down the Admiral.* When the author of that work cast his eyes upon it on the opening day, he exclaimed to a friend, "I have heard of the effect of the Exhibition upon pictures, but I will not believe the change in mine is produced in that way. *No, by Jove!*—look here; some of those dashed R.A.'s have been at it! I can see the glaze all over it." A formal complaint was made to the Council; the guilty R.A. acknowledged his crime, was reprimanded, and a bye-law was made, ordering that no Academician or other exhibitor should, under grievous penalties, dare to paint on anybody's picture but his own. I had never heard of the crime or the order arising out of it, until after I was an Associate. At the request of my friend Egg, I was making some trifling alteration in his picture, when one of the Council came to me, and peremptorily ordering me to stop, told me the story of "toning down the Admiral."

All this time my profession was not providing me

with income enough to "pay for my washing," as my uncle put it. Instead of living to see the days of my success, my father had died before I was heard of as an artist. My aunt, whose sight I must say was somewhat impaired, could see "nothing whatever to admire in your pictures, Master William;" and as to anybody buying one, I had never, up to 1840, received a farthing for any of my pictures. After my Liverpool fifteen-pound triumph, I either gave them away to people who didn't want them, but were too polite to refuse them, or I sold them to people who forgot to pay even the modest sum demanded.

The "Madge Wildfire" became the property of an artist friend, who never paid for it, because, as he said when I remonstrated, "I couldn't sell it, and was obliged to change it for a piano for my sister, and the piano hasn't got a note to its back."

The "Malvolio" was bought by a picture-dealer for twenty pounds, and he became a bankrupt immediately afterwards.

In short, if I hadn't been possessed of a dear old mother who ministered to all my wants, I must have gone auctioneering after all. "And a precious deal better for you, sir," said my uncle, "than this ridiculous business of yours."

Under these circumstances, I thought it very fortunate that I had another call for Lincolnshire portraits. Some of those I had painted on my first visits were thought good likenesses; sufficiently so, at any rate, to induce a demand for more. This time

I was more conscientious and careful in my work than ever, and the result was a considerable improvement all round.

I found myself employed by a higher class of clients; amongst them was a fox-hunting squire, a magistrate and a hater of poachers, every one of whom when brought before him he would have hanged if he could. He was a fine-looking old fellow, with a very handsome family of sons and daughters. A domestic trouble had driven his wife, a most lovely creature, away from her home. The story went that she declared with many tears that she was innocent of the sin imputed to her, and on her knees prayed for blindness "if she were false in word or deed."

The proofs of her guilt, however, were overwhelming, and she was sent to Wales, where she lived many years, and became *totally blind!* She was allowed at last to return and inhabit a little cottage in her husband's park, where her family, now grown up, occasionally visited her, but the Squire *never*. Although she, being sightless, need not have known of his visit, if he had chosen to pay her one, nothing would induce him to go near her. At last the inevitable hour came to her, as it will come to all of us. I had heard she was dangerously ill, and, during one of the last sittings for the portrait, as I was working away listening to the Squire's stories, his eldest son came into our temporary studio with very red eyes, and said something in an undertone to his father.

"*No!*" said the old squire, "*I will not!*" and the son left the room.

"Pray don't think of me or the picture, Squire," said I. "I have very little to do to finish the sitting, and can do it almost as well without you, if you want——"

"Did you see that boy?" broke in the Squire (the boy was over thirty); "he had been crying, a great fellow like that. And for what?—troubling himself about his mother, who has done nothing all her life but trouble us. I go to see her! I'll see her—— But there, go on with your work;" and before I had finished my work the poor woman had died without her husband's forgiveness, for which, I was told, she implored with bitter tears.

Soon after this my second "provincial tour" of portrait-painting came to an end, and again I returned to the little back parlour in Osnaburgh Street, this time determined to rival my artist friends, who were all more or less successfully engaged in painting subject-pictures, exhibiting them (when or where they could get them admitted), and sometimes, though not always, selling them.

CHAPTER IX.

MY FIRST SUCCESS.

THE Art Union had been established some little time, and had been the means of assisting many young painters, who without such aid would have been compelled to abandon their profession. Good and evil are mixed together in all human institutions, and the Art Union of London is an example of the truth of the rule. Subscribers to that lottery are allowed to select their picture prizes, and the consequence is that works of indifferent merit are often chosen, and men are encouraged in the pursuit of art who ought never to have studied it at all. So much for the mischief of the Art Union. For the other side, instances could be shown of pictures of undoubted merit having escaped from being returned unsold to their producers, by enlightened selectors of Art Union prizes. For example, Maclise's picture of the "Sleeping Beauty," now in the possession of Mr. Pender, M.P., was the chief prize in the year 1840. My admiration for Maclise, owing much to youthful and, I fear, somewhat mistaken enthusiasm, scarcely stopped short of worship—his power of

drawing, his prodigality of invention, the facility with which he grouped crowds of figures, and the splendour of imagination displayed in all he did, carried me away captive, and influenced my practice to its detriment.

Under happier circumstances I have always believed, and still believe, that Maclise would have been one of the greatest artists that ever lived, if his birth had been put back two or three centuries, and he had been coerced as the great masters were, and subjected to a seven years' apprenticeship to one of the old Venetians. Then the redundancy of his imagination, and the facility with which he reproduced its images, would have been subjected to a discipline that would have enforced a continual study of nature, and a constant copying from it, in everything he would have been permitted to attempt. Instead of such mediæval training, after a perfunctory education at the Royal Academy, the bright young fellow was left to his own unaided and "Will-o'-the-wisp" efforts. His great natural powers betrayed him ; he painted huge compositions of figures without using models. His sense of colour, never very strong, was destroyed by his constant indulgence in the baleful practice of painting without nature before him. His eyes, as he told me himself, saw the minutest details at distances impossible to ordinary vision. He was evidently proud of his eyes, and he indulged them to the utter destruction of "breadth" in his pictures. As to colour, he gave it up altogether; and when any reference was made to the

old masters or the National Gallery, Maclise expressed his contempt in much the same words as those of another mistaken clever brother R.A., who would "like to burn them all from Moscow to Madrid."

I would not have attempted this autobiography if I had not possessed myself with the hope of being of service to my young brethren, either in the way of warning from my own mistakes, or from those of others; and I take Maclise as a specially typical instance of the perversion of remarkable powers. As a man, Maclise, whom I knew well in after life, was delightful in every way; very handsome in person, and of a generous and noble disposition; enthusiastic in his appreciation of contemporary work, free from the slightest taint of envy of others, and universally regretted when he died, after having scarcely passed middle life. The last speech Dickens made in public was at the Academy banquet following Maclise's death, when the great writer in a few pathetic and eloquent words, never to be forgotten—lamenting the untimely death of his friend—declared his belief, that if instead of art, literature had been Maclise's aim, a great, or greater success than that he had achieved in art, would have attended him in letters.

I have said that my worship of Maclise resulted in some damage to myself. Of course I copied his faults. His facility of design being beyond my power of imitation, I fell back on his love of detail, and the absence of truth and nature in the colour-

ing of his flesh; and these failings I reproduced so successfully as to give me afterwards enormous trouble to correct. I remember a young artist friend saying to me: "Maclise is out and away the greatest artist that ever lived. There isn't an old master fit to hold a candle to him; and if I could only get some of his worst qualities into my pictures I should be satisfied."

I confess I shared those foolish sentiments to a great extent; but I speedily found out my mistake —a condition of mind I heartily desire for some young painters who at this time are worshipping false gods, with bodies of brass and feet of clay; at whose shrine the chief high-priest is a mountebank without the excuse of ignorance or want of capacity to explain the prostitution of talents, if not genius, to purposes so absurd as to make it a world's wonder how any followers of such a craze can exist for a moment.

Until a young painter finds out his natural bent, —if he have one—he is apt not only to imitate the manner of his favourite artist, but to try to paint similar subjects, illustrate the same book or poem, or in some way or other follow in the revered footsteps. Strong-headed men avoid this pitfall. I fell into it, and when Maclise painted men in armour, I did a man in armour too. Maclise had done a lady in a red jacket taking leave of a knight in armour —one of the finest things ever done in the world, I thought—and I immediately tried to do something

like it. My man was also a knight who, having alighted at an inn for refreshment, and finding himself waited upon by a damsel in a red jacket, proceeded to demean himself in a somewhat ungentlemanly, and therefore unknightly, fashion. He had

"Carved his meal
With gloves of steel,"

and probably taken more Malvoisie than was good for him, and forthwith made desperate love to the maid; who with a smiling countenance listened to his raptures, expressed by a hideous grin on his bearded face, as with one arm round the red waist and the other raised on high, holding the brimming cup, he vowed eternal constancy, or something of the kind.

I don't know what became of that great work. If the possessor should by chance read these lines, I hope he will be induced to allow me to see my early friend once more. In it I succeeded so well in reproducing nearly all Maclise's worst qualities, that a candid friend said on seeing "The Knight and Maid of the Hostelry"—as I christened the picture—"Hullo! you are coming Maclise over us. I'll tell you what, old fellow, that thing will be sold for a bad Maclise some day, and you will have an action brought against you."

Armour, with its sheen and glitter, has always been in favour with young painters, either as an important factor in still life, or as an inspiration, often the sole inspiration, in pictures of chivalrous character. I remember one, the production of a young friend of

Dickens, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter. The picture represented a very ancient and noble-looking knight, who had sunk down at the foot of an old tree, overcome with the fatigue of his journey from the wars, within what appeared to be easy reach of his castle; the battlements of which were visible amongst the trees. Some children, also apparently of noble birth—his grandchildren, perhaps—were timidly offering him some apples, the produce in all probability of the orchard in which the old man was resting. I knew Dickens took great interest in the young artist, and in this his first work, and meeting him one day, I asked his opinion.

"A capital picture," said Dickens, in his hearty way. "I was delighted to see it. Armour beautifully done. Apples too—only I think the old boy was too far gone for apples. It would require *burnt brandy*, and a good deal of it, to bring *him* to."

The year following the exhibition of my "Malvolio" I sent to the Academy a picture from "Kenilworth;" the subject was an interview between Leicester and his Countess Amy, when, at the end of one of the wicked earl's stolen visits to Cumnor Place, he is anxious to free himself from the lady's importunity, and in reply to her remonstrance, "Did ever lady with bare foot in slipper seek boon of brave knight, yet return with denial?" he says: "Anything, Amy, that thou canst ask I will grant, except that which will ruin us both." All this simply because the poor woman desired that her marriage should be no longer kept secret. I had

been to Knole House—that delightful hunting-ground for artists, now unhappily closed to us—and had made studies of King James's bed and other details for my picture, all of which I painted very carefully; and the result was, that as human beings are more difficult to render than chairs and bedsteads, my picture was more admired for the still-life objects than for the living creatures. Once more I figured in the Architecture Room, but lower on the wall, and I entirely escaped the notice of both critics and purchasers. What became of my Kenilworth picture, or whether it was sold or given away—the latter most likely—I cannot remember.

My delusion with regard to Maclise was soon over, so far as imitation of his manner was concerned; but the example set by him in illustrating "Gil Blas" and the "Vicar of Wakefield" caused so many Vicars and Gil Blases to blossom on the walls of the Exhibitions from the hands of many admirers, that the critics fell foul of us; and Thackeray, who was the critic in *Fraser* of that day, declined to give the names of either Gil Blas or the Vicar in full, but always wrote of the latter as the "V——r of W———d," and warned us that if our servile conduct was persevered in, he would never look at pictures of either of those distinguished individuals, much less write about them.

I now come to what I may call my first success, and the subject was taken from the much-tormented "Vicar of Wakefield," the scene being that in which Mrs. Primrose makes her daughter and Squire

Thornhill stand up together to see which is the taller, a transparent device which, as the good old book says, she thought impenetrable. To my intense delight this picture was hung upon the line, that envied, coveted position which so many are destined to long for, but never to occupy. I confess I was as much astonished as I was delighted, for I had no interest, not knowing a single member of the Academy

Acting upon what I thought the wildest advice, I fixed the price of a hundred guineas upon the picture, and it was bought on the Private-View day by an Art Union prize-holder, Mr. Zouch Troughton, who is now my very old friend. My cup was full.

"Never," said I to an artist friend, who I thought might have congratulated me on my success, "will I be off the line again!"

"Never be on it again, you mean," was the reply. "And if you will take my advice, you will go as often as you can to the Exhibition and enjoy yourself, for you may never have another chance."

As poor Haydon said to us in his lecture on the subject of Public Criticism, "It is no doubt pleasant to read printed praise attached to your name; but if you live long enough you will find your name in the papers in a form that will make you wish it out again."

I was not long in experiencing the truth of this. One criticism on the "Vicar of Wakefield" picture in a leading paper began thus: "Mr. Frith is a

rising artist, and he has already risen to the height of affectation," etc., etc. This is all I can remember, but much more of similar severity followed.

I would here advise all artists, young and old, never to read art criticism. Nothing is to be learnt from it. Let me ask any painter if, when he wants advice upon any difficulty in the conduct of his work, he would seek it from an art critic?—No, I reply for him; he would apply to an artist friend. But though, as I believe, no advantage accrues in any case to an artist from public criticism, much undeserved pain is often inflicted, and even injury caused, by the virulent attacks that sometimes disgrace the press. For very many years—indeed ever since I became convinced of the profound ignorance of the writers—I have never read a word of art criticism. "That accounts for your not painting better," I hear the critic say. I think not; but I have no doubt saved myself from a good deal of annoyance.

I have said before that I believe little or no envy of each other's success exists amongst artists; but my friend who prophesied no more "line" space for me was an exception to the rule. If ever there was a disappointed artist, he was one, and he candidly showed his disappointment and envy on all available occasions. He was a portrait-painter, when he could induce anybody to sit to him, and he sometimes painted tolerable portraits; but when they failed he fell foul of Shakespeare and other poets. He once told me of what he called a piece of rude-

ness offered to him by a sitter, whose portrait was better looking than the original in everybody's eyes but his own. At first the victim refused to pay, but yielded after pressure. He then said to my friend: "Well, loads of my friends have seen my likeness, and they say it is TOLERABLE—and it may be; a man can't judge of his own appearance—but I bargained for a GOOD picture, not a *tolerable* picture. How would you like a *tolerable* egg?"

I remember walking down Portland Place with my friend, who had suffered from a long interregnum of sitters, and looking up at the stately houses, he said: "There, just look at that place—what tremendous rooms there must be in it! what walls for whole lengths! And just look at that old fellow coming out—there's a picture! and I can't get a single thing to do!"

There is no doubt that premature success sometimes turns the heads of young artists. Everybody has heard of "Single-speech Hamilton." That orator was a member of Parliament, and once—and once only—he made a brilliant speech. So remarkable was it, that his elevation to high honour was considered to be assured. Single-picture painters crop up now and then—I have seen several examples.

For myself, I can truly say my success acted as a spur to further exertion, and so sure did I feel that I had a fair field and no favour, that I instantly set about a large composition, consisting of all, or nearly all, the characters in the "Merry Wives of Windsor,"

assembled in front of Page's house. Falstaff, sweet Anne Page, Slender, and the fat man's followers. Millais sat for me for Mrs. Page's little son, and I thought I was fortunate in realizing many of the characters. The picture was large, elaborately finished, and it went to the Academy, followed by much commendation from friends, and a good deal of satisfaction from myself.

None but artists know the dreadful anxiety of those weeks of waiting till the fate of many months of labour is decided. I was anxious enough; but as I knew I had improved, I could not conceive the possibility of *one* effort being thought worthy of one of the *best* places in the Exhibition, and *another*, after a year's experience, being only thought deserving of the *worst*. Such, however, was my unhappy fate. In the worst room's worst light hung my unfortunate picture. Very high, opposite the wretched little window of the dreadful Octagon Room, was thought a sufficiently good position for Falstaff and his friends. Again, if I had been quite dependent on my profession for my bread I must have starved, and to this hour I feel I was treated unjustly.

I well remember dear kind Etty mounting some steps to look at my work, and when he descended he pressed my hand, and in his gentle voice he said: "Very cruel, very cruel."

The subsequent fate of the picture should be related. After the close of the R.A. Exhibition I sent it to Liverpool, where it must have been better seen, for it found a purchaser for a hundred pounds. At

my request the owner allowed me to exhibit the picture again in London. At that time the Exhibition of the British Institution existed, and it was mostly filled with pictures which had been previously seen at the Academy.

Without a sanguine expectation of success I sent in my work, and it was hung in a centre place on the line. When I entered the gallery on the varnishing-day, one of the three Academicians who had condemned Falstaff to the Octagon Room, was looking at my work, and evidently speaking of it to a friend of mine.

"What does the old wretch say?" said I, as I drew my friend on one side.

"Why, he says, if your picture had been in the state it now is, it would have had a first-rate place at the Academy. He says you have worked all over it, and improved it wonderfully."

"And did you tell him it had never been touched since he murdered it?"

"Yes, I did, and he said he didn't believe a word of that."

One of the greatest difficulties besetting me has always been the choice of subject. My inclination being strongly towards the illustration of modern life, I had read the works of Dickens in the hope of finding material for the exercise of any talent I might possess; but at that time the ugliness of modern dress frightened me, and it was not till the publication of "Barnaby Rudge," and the delightful Dolly Varden was presented to us, that I felt my

opportunity had come, with the cherry-coloured mantle and the hat and pink ribbons.

It would be difficult to convey to the present generation the intense delight with which each new work of Dickens was received; and I can easily believe the story that was current at the time of the sick man, who, lying as was thought on his death-bed, and listening apparently with becoming reverence to the warnings of his clergyman—was heard to mutter as the divine left the room—"That's all very well. Thank goodness, a new number of 'Pickwick' comes out on Wednesday."

I found a capital model for Dolly, and I painted her in a variety of attitudes. First, where she is admiring a bracelet given her by Miss Haredale; then as she leans laughing against a tree; then again, in an interview with Miss Haredale, where she is the bearer of a letter from that lady's lover; and again, when on being accused of a penchant for Joe, she declares indignantly, "She hoped she could do better than *that*, indeed!"

These pictures easily found purchasers, though for sums small enough. The laughing Dolly, afterwards engraved, became very popular, replicas of it being made for Dickens's friend, John Forster, and others.

It goes without saying that I had read all that Dickens had written, beginning with the "Sketches by Boz;" and I can well remember my disappointment when I found that the real name of the author was *Dickens*. I refused to believe that such a

genius could have such a vulgar name; and now what a halo surrounds it!

I had never seen the man, who in my estimation was, and is, one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived; my sensations therefore may be imagined when I received the following letter:

"1, Devonshire Terrace,
"York Gate, Regent's Park,
"November 15, 1842.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I shall be very glad if you will do me the favour to paint me two little companion pictures; one, a Dolly Varden (whom you have so exquisitely done already), the other, a Kate Nickleby.

"Faithfully yours always,
"CHARLES DICKENS.

"P.S.—I take it for granted that the original picture of Dolly with the bracelet is sold."

My mother and I cried over that letter, and the wonder is that anything is left of it, for I showed it to every friend I had, and was admired and envied by all.

And now came the fear that I might fail in again satisfying the author.

Kate Nickleby, too! Impossible, perhaps, to please the author of her being with my presentment of her —but I must try. And many were the sketches I made, till I fixed upon a scene at Madame Mantalini's—where Kate figures as a work-woman—

the point chosen being at the moment when her thoughts wander from her work, as she sits sewing a ball-dress spread upon her knees.

Dolly Varden was represented tripping through the woods, and looking back saucily at her lover.

The pictures were finished, and a letter was written to say so. See me then in hourly and very trembling expectation of a visit from a man whom I thought superhuman. A knock at the door. "Come in." Enter a pale young man with long hair, a white hat, a formidable stick in his left hand, and his right extended to me with a frank cordiality, and a friendly clasp, that never relaxed till the day of his untimely death.

The pictures were on the easel. He sat down before them, and I stood waiting for the verdict in an agony of mind that was soon relieved by his cheery—

"All I can say is, they are exactly what I meant, and I am very much obliged to you for painting them for me."

I muttered something, and if I didn't look very foolish, my looks belied my sensations.

"Shall you be at home on Sunday afternoon? I should like to bring Mrs. Dickens and my sister-in-law to see how well you have done your work. May I?"

"By all means. I shall be delighted."

Sunday came, and Dickens with it.

I was standing at the house-door, when a carriage driven by "Boz" drove up to it, the bright steel bar

in front giving the "turn-out" a very striking appearance to one like myself not at all accustomed to curricles. 'Tis enough to say the ladies approved, and Dickens gave me a cheque for forty pounds for the two pictures.

I hope I may be excused for telling in this place that "Dolly" and her companion were sold at Christie's, after Dickens's death, for thirteen hundred guineas. I am ignorant of the local habitation of either of the pictures at the present time. That "Dolly," quite the best of the series, was never engraved. "Kate Nickleby" was more fortunate. An engraver applied through me to Dickens, who readily consented to part with the picture for a "reasonable time."

It appeared that a difference of opinion existed between Dickens and the engraver as to the meaning of that phrase, for after waiting for his picture for two or three years, I received from Dickens the following evidence that his patience was becoming exhausted:

"*Advertisement.*

"To K—e N——y (the young lady in black).

"K— N——, if you will return to your disconsolate friends in Devonshire Terrace, your absence in Ireland will be forgotten and forgiven, and you will be received with open arms. Think of your dear sister, Dolly, and how altered her appearance and character are without you! She is not the

same girl. Think, too, of the author of your being, and what he must feel when he sees your place empty every day!

"October 10, 1848."

The reading of Dickens's works has no doubt engendered a love for the writer in thousands of hearts. How that affection would have been increased could his readers have had personal knowledge of the man, can only be known to those who, like myself, had the happiness of his intimate acquaintance.

Of Dickens's great rival, Thackeray, I had but slight knowledge, only, indeed, sufficient to prejudice me strongly, and I have no doubt foolishly, against him. Under his pseudonym of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Thackeray had written a charming criticism of a picture of mine in *Fraser's Magazine*, and as he had already given sufficient proof in literary work that he was a giant among men, I was very curious to see him, and, if possible, to make his acquaintance. Between forty and fifty years ago, a club called "The Deanery" existed in Dean Street, Soho; the members being chiefly literary men, artists, lawyers, and such like, with a sprinkling of men of no special mark. Amongst the latter was a friend of my own, who invited me to dine with him on an evening when Thackeray was pretty sure to be at the club. My friend expressed his regret that the man I so much desired to see was not in the dining-room, but he had little doubt of our finding him afterwards in the smoking-room, to which we

adjourned later in the evening. I may startle some of my acquaintance by declaring that I am, and always have been, a highly nervous, retiring, and modest person—indeed, I often regret my timidity—and if I had been more impudent and self-assertive I should have been more successful in the world. Like a wicked old lady, a friend of Mulready's, who assured him, when drawing very near the close of an erratic life, that if she had "only been virtuous it would have been pounds and pounds in her pocket"! I feel that though I might not have been more virtuous I should have been more prosperous, if a kind of panic, created by a knowledge of my own shortcomings, had not so often made me dumb when I ought to have been more self-assertive.

My friend and I entered the Deanery smoking-room and found a very convivial party; all intimately acquainted seemingly, listening to a song from a gentleman called Mahony, who, under the name of Father Prout, had made himself somewhat celebrated. By his side sat a big man, to whom I was introduced, and I had the honour of a hand-shake by the great Thackeray. I was very young at the time, although I had just been elected an Associate of the Academy, and I sat in awe-struck silence listening to the brilliant talk of those men. Some one called on Thackeray for a song, and he instantly struck up one of his own writing, as I was told. I forget the words, but I remember two individuals—Gorgeing Jack and Guzzling Jimmy—who seemed to be the presiding geniuses of it. No sooner had the applause

accorded to it subsided, than Thackeray turned to me and said: "Now then, Frith, you d——d saturnine young Academician, sing us a song!"

I was dumb before this address, and far too confounded to say anything in reply. Encouraged, perhaps, by my proving myself such an easy butt, the attack was renewed a little later in the evening: "I'll tell you what it is, Frith, you had better go home; your aunt is sitting up for you with a big muffin." Again I was paralyzed, and shortly after I went home.

After this I contented myself with admiration for the works of the great author, without feeling any desire for a more intimate acquaintance with the man. Of course, I often met Thackeray afterwards, but I never gave him an opportunity for renewing his playful attacks. I know very well that Thackeray was much beloved by those who knew him intimately, and I have often been abused by some of his friends (notably by dear Leech) for my absurd anger at what was meant for a joke; but I submit that such attacks on an inoffensive stranger were very poor jokes, and even after the long lapse of time I feel humiliated and pained in recalling them.

The very nature of an autobiography entails upon the writer such a constant use of the first person singular as to make his performance egotistical in the extreme, and though I hope, in the course of my narrative, I shall have a good deal to say of other people, I must perforce talk much of myself and my own doings.

To resume, then. I felt my banishment to the Octagon Room (a detestable closet, still to be seen at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square) so keenly, that a kind of despair seized me, and I adopted the advice of my friends and started for a trip up the Rhine with my friend Egg, taking Antwerp and Brussels *en route* to Cologne, pausing at the former places where we expected to find some of the art-treasures of the world. Our anticipations were fully realized, but I shall say little about them in this place, for a second visit was made to the country of the great Dutch and Flemish painters some years later (a full account of which will be found in the succeeding pages of these reminiscences), when I found that several years' study had enabled me better to appreciate the powers of great artists.

At Antwerp, Rubens is seen in all his glory. A terrible sense of inferiority takes possession of all sensible painters on seeing the works of the greatest men. To approach them, much less rival them, seems utterly hopeless. This depressing feeling has to be subdued; and then a reverent study of the methods and principles displayed in immortal works will improve all who study them with intelligence. Mere copying is of little service, as it is generally —to use Sir Joshua's words—but "industrious idleness."

At the time of which I am speaking, the modern exhibition in Paris, now called the Salon, took place in the Louvre; the modern pictures being hung in

front of the old masters. The admirable drawing and, in many instances, the great beauty and careful finish of the pictures by some of the best French painters—who in those days exhibited amongst their less eminent brethren—inspired me with a determination to go home and "do likewise." On my return, I began another composition from the tabooed "Vicar of Wakefield," the subject being "Thornhill relating his London adventures to the Vicar's family," and a smaller picture of "Knox reproving Mary Queen of Scots." The "Vicar" again took his place upon the line, the "Knox" was a little below it, but in an excellent position; so, in spite of my friend's prediction, I was again on the line, and for the last eight-and-forty years I have never been off it. In the same Exhibition with *my* "Vicar of Wakefield" and "John Knox" was *another* subject from the "Vicar," and *another* "John Knox;" the former being an exquisite picture called the "Whistonian Controversy" (by Mulready), and the other, "Knox reproving the Ladies of Queen Mary's Court" (by Chalon). Thereby hangs a tale.

In the following summer, but while the Exhibition was still open, I was sketching in Stoke Pogeis Churchyard. This place, being the supposed scene of Gray's "Elegy," and the burial-place of the poet, is much frequented by tourists; and one day when I was far advanced with an oil-sketch of the ivy-covered church, a gentleman and some ladies, after admiring the church, marched across the graves and began to admire my representation of it. The

gentleman, who was what is called a "languid swell," with Dundreary whiskers and a fashionable drawl, thus addressed me:

"How very charming! Look," he said to his lady friends, "how delightfully the ivy is touched in!" And then, again addressing himself to me, he said: "I feel sure an artist who paints so well must be an exhibitor at the Royal Academy. May I ask if I am right?"

"Quite right," said I.

Then he said, in tones of affected apology:

"May I ask if you exhibit this year in the Exhibition now open?"

"Yes; I have two pictures in the Exhibition."

"Then I must have seen them, of course; would you mind naming the subjects?"

"Well, one is taken from the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and the other——" but before I could say another word I was stopped by a loud exclamation of delight at his having the honour of speaking to the painter of the "Whistonian Controversy."

"You remember that splendid work, dear Miss Something-or-other—the obstinacy of the Vicar's opponent so wonderfully done," etc., etc.

I allowed him to exhaust himself with admiration, and then quietly told him he had made a mistake, and that the "Whistonian Controversy" was by Mulready, R.A.

"But I understood you to say that your picture is from the 'Vicar of Wakefield'?"

"So it is, but from quite another part of the book.

My picture represents Squire Thornhill relating his town adventures to the Vicar's family."

"Ha! oh—yes—dear me—well now, I can't remember seeing that. Did you see what this gentleman describes, Miss So-and-so?"

"No; we must have missed it somehow."

"And the second picture," said the gentleman, "you were so kind as to—er?"

"The second," said I, "was John Knox and——"

"Oh!" exclaimed one of the ladies, "we saw *that*, and thought it so beautiful!"

"Yes," said the gentleman, apparently quite relieved and delighted to find that he had seen one of my works at any rate. "It is indeed a charming picture. You remember," turning to his friends, "how lovely we thought the dancing ladies, contrasting so admirably with the imposing figure of Knox. Sir, I must congratulate you on producing so great a work."

"I am really sorry," said I, "but you are wrong again; the 'Knox' you speak of is painted by Chalon, R.A." Again I described my own picture, and again the party had to confess that by some strange mischance they had overlooked my second contribution to the Exhibition as completely as they had the first.

The party took their leave of me, determined—at least, so they said—to go again to Trafalgar Square on purpose to see works which they really could not forgive themselves for having so stupidly missed.

CHAPTER X.

ELECTED AN ASSOCIATE.

A GREAT change has taken place since the year 1844, when such men as Sheepshanks, Vernon, Miller, Gibbons, and others were collecting works of modern art, influenced by the love of it, and not by the notion of investment so common in the last few years. Prominent among the former class of purchasers was Mr. Gibbons, a Birmingham banker, whose acquaintance I made through the exhibition of two pictures at the annual exhibition in that town. On finding that both were sold, Mr. Gibbons commissioned me to paint him some subject from Sterne or Goldsmith, and I suggested for illustration the well-known verse in the "Deserted Village," which describes the village parson leaving his church, when

> "Children followed with endearing wile,
> And pluck'd his gown to share the good man's smile."

The scene is in the churchyard, and many peasants and their wives crowd round the clergyman, making a very elaborate composition. The

price of the picture was fixed at two hundred pounds, a larger sum than I had received for any picture at that time. Mr. Gibbons was an elderly man in delicate health, with a great love of art, and very considerable knowledge of it; in fact, a polished, well-educated gentleman. He came to live in London, and watched the progress of the "Village Pastor" with very intelligent and, to me, most agreeable interest. If he disapproved of any detail he would "hint the fault and hesitate dislike," always in the kindest spirit, and I generally found his criticism serviceable.

The work advanced rapidly and I thought successfully, and in due time made its appearance in Trafalgar Square, where it was amongst the fortunate "liners."

I had not long made the acquaintance of one of the most delightful of English landscape-painters, and meeting him in the Exhibition, he advised me to put my name down for the degree of Associate, an honour already in his own possession. I well remember what wild folly the idea seemed to me, and said:

"You are surely joking; what chance have I of being made an Associate?"

"Not any," said he; "but I would advise you to put down your name, so as to familiarize the Royal Academicans with it."

"No, no!" said I; "it's too absurd."

"Well, then, I will do it for you," said Creswick, and it was well for me he did.

The "Village Pastor" made a favourable impression on the public generally, and many were the compliments I received from the source most valued, namely, my brother artists.

When an election takes place of either Associate or Academician, great is the excitement amongst the aspirants; and rare indeed is it that the day of election is unknown to any of those whose names are on the list from which the choice is to be made. I can most truly say I was one of the ignorant, for though Creswick had said he would put down my name, I never gave the matter another thought, so impossible did it seem to me that a very young man—who was but just before the public, not having exhibited more than two or three pictures that had attracted any notice—should have the remotest chance of success in the election for which I thought there must be many more worthy candidates.

My profound astonishment, therefore, may be imagined when one of the Academy porters, my old friend Williamson, called to tell me that I was made what he called "a A.R.A." It could not be—it was not to be believed.

"If this is a joke, Williamson," said I, feeling myself turn very pale, "it is not a kind one."

"Joke, sir! Lord. bless you, you was elected all right night before last. I thought you must have heerd on it."

I think the porter had my diploma—signed by Turner, pro President, with Howard's name as Secretary attached to it—which he handed to me from a

portfolio, but I am not certain of that particular; but what I am quite sure of is, that in a few hours it was in my possession, making "assurance doubly sure."

It was a custom at that time for all newly elected members to call upon the Academicians to make the acquaintance of those august individuals, and to respectfully thank them for what was, in many instances, imaginary support. This ceremony has not fallen into complete desuetude; but its observance has occasionally led to embarrassment, and much discomfort, to the newly-fledged Associate. It could not be pleasant, for instance, for a *painter* of great ability, whose pictures had been the "observed of all observers" for some years, to be received by an old Academician in the following fashion: "Yes, there was an election last night I know, but I couldn't go; my doctor won't let me go out at night. Ah! things are so altered; my old friends are all gone. Well, I suppose I must congratulate you. You are an *architect*, ain't you?"

For myself, I had little to complain of; I had heard of the danger of "thanking people for assistance that might not have been afforded," and I therefore confined myself to a few platitudes about "being unworthy of the honour, but determined to prove my devotion to the interests of Art and the Academy," etc. One candid old gentleman, who told me he had known Sir Joshua Reynolds, immediately denied all complicity in my election. "Not, my dear young man, that you may not deserve your

good fortune—I cannot say, for I have never seen any of your work." Many of the Forty were either from home, or pretended to be; but I caught Mr. H. W. Pickersgill, the well-known and accomplished portrait-painter of that period, and who then lived in Soho Square. He received me very kindly, and in the middle of an eloquent exhortation as to my future conduct, Mrs. Pickersgill entered the room. She was a very handsome old lady, with a ravishing smile, and beautiful teeth—so wonderfully beautiful as to raise doubts as to their origin. I was instantly introduced to her.

"This young gentleman, my dear, is Mr. Frith."

"Well," said Mrs. Pickersgill.

"Mr. Frith, my dear, was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy the other evening."

"*Well*," replied the lady, "he is no better for that."

My election found me at work upon two pictures; one being an illustration of Molière's "Bourgeois Gentilhomme," a commission from Mr. Gibbons; the other a scene from Gray's "Elegy," which was also a commission from Mr. Farrer, a well-known picture-dealer and connoisseur of that day. I think neither of these pictures fulfilled the expectations raised by the "Village Pastor," either in my friends or myself; and I felt the imperative necessity of immediately embarking on some subject of such importance as should justify my election, by the manner in which I should execute the work.

In the meantime I attended my first banquet at

the Royal Academy. The great dinner that takes place before the opening of the Exhibition is generally considered *the* public dinner of the year, and when it is understood that those eligible to take part in that remarkable gathering must either be persons of exalted rank, or great as statesmen, military or naval heroes, ecclesiastical or legal dignitaries, or eminent professors of science or literature, or (if last, by no means least) well-known patrons of art, it is evident that an assemblage almost unique must be the result.

It has been my good fortune to assist at a great many Academy banquets, but the first dwells still vividly in my memory. Sir Martin Shee, the then President, took the chair; with the great Duke of Wellington on his left, some royal prince or duke on his right. The tables were filled with distinguished persons, whose names were of course familiar to me, and whose personal appearance I was curious to become acquainted with, for in those days photography did not make known to us, as it does now, the faces and figures of nearly every celebrity. The assembling of the guests amongst the pictures before the dinner was therefore watched with intense interest.

On this occasion political animosity seemed to sleep. I saw the Prime Minister in friendly talk with the leader of the Opposition; well-known political antagonists of less prominence chatted together. The Duke of Wellington, catalogue in hand, was examining a picture, when the Marquis of Anglesey,

lame from the loss of his leg at Waterloo, tapped him on the shoulder. Black silk breeches were occasionally worn at that time, and Sir Martin Archer Shee, Sir Robert Peel, and several others, adopted the style of dress then fast dying out, but one far more becoming than the trouser fashion that succeeded it.

As the youngest member, I was placed very properly in the worst position at the dinner-table, close to the door, through which a cruel draught played ever and anon upon me. But little did I think of such a drawback when, after the toast of "The Army and Navy," the great Duke rose to reply. I can see him now, the gray head bent, in acknowledgment of the thunder of applause that greeted him, the broad blue ribbon of the Garter across the white waistcoat, and then the thin piping voice in which, in a few well-chosen words, he replied to the toast. Other speakers there were, of course, more to the manner born; but none interested me like the "Prince of Waterloo."

The banquet took place in the large room of the present National Gallery—nearest to St. Martin's Church—at that time in the possession of the Royal Academy. The principal table, from which branch tables were projected, was placed round the room, leaving space between it and the pictures for the service of the dinner, and for the guests—if they were so minded—to examine the pictures. I believe it is pretty well known that the great Duke had no sympathy with poetry or poets, and not unfrequently

expressed his contempt for both. No wonder then that quotations from the famous manuscript poem, called the "Fallacies of Hope" (a work presumed to be the offspring of Turner's muse, and quotations from which were appended to every picture he exhibited), puzzled the Duke, as they did everybody else. An Academician, after trying in vain to comprehend one of them, declared it was all "fallacy and no hope." It was my lot to hear another comment, from no less a person than the Duke himself. I was walking round the tables, reading the names of the intended diners, when I suddenly came upon the Duke of Wellington, who was standing in such a position between the table and the pictures as to leave no space for me to pass behind him, and I refrained from passing in front.

The picture he was studying was called "Rain, Steam, and Speed," a rather eccentric representation of a train in full speed on the Great Western Railway. Unperceived, I watched the Duke's puzzled expression as he read the quotation from the "Fallacies of Hope." He then looked steadily at the picture, and with a muttered "Ah! *poetry!*" walked on.

Dickens, Thackeray, Macready, and Rogers were guests upon the occasion of my first appearance at the Academy banquet. I saw Rogers descend the stairs leaning on Dickens's arm, a support much needed for a man who was "so old," as Maclise said, "that Death seemed to have forgotten him."

It was on that occasion also, I think, that

Thackeray, on returning thanks for literature, spoke of his own early desire to be a painter, and his disappointment when, on taking some sketches to Dickens in the hope of being employed to illustrate one of his books, the great novelist "declined his contributions with thanks."

There were some pictures in the Exhibition illustrating "Dombey and Son;" I told Dickens of them. "Yes," he said, "I know there are; just go and see them, and tell me what they are like. I don't like to be caught looking at them myself."

CHAPTER XI.

THE "OLD ENGLISH MERRY-MAKING."

THOUGH my Molière picture was not a sufficient improvement upon my previous work to add anything to my reputation, it took the fancy of an eccentric gentleman who successfully tempted Mr. Gibbons—its first purchaser—to part with it, by offering him just three times the sum he had paid me for it. I must add that out of this tempting profit Mr. Gibbons made me a present of fifty guineas.

The other and still more inferior picture met with a somewhat similar success, without any participation in the profit by me. In the hope that the future would prove that I had only receded in order to make a longer jump, I immediately embarked on a large composition of an "English Village Festival"—eventually christened "An Old English Merry-making," now pretty well known through a very beautiful engraving of it, executed by William Holl. A large oak-tree occupies the centre of the picture; lovers and dancers amuse themselves in its "chequered shade." An old man is dragged by his children towards the dancers, in spite of his evident

protest "that his dancing-days are over." Gipsy fortune-tellers, and peasantry playing bowls or drinking, complete the scene. I put no trust in fancy for the smallest detail of the picture. The oak-tree is a portrait of a patriarch of Windsor Forest, whom I recognised the other day unchanged in the slightest degree; could the tree have seen me, I am sure he would not have known me again. It may be as justly said of old oaks, as Wilkie's monk said of the pictorial treasures of his monastery, "They are the substance, and we are the shadows." The cottages are studies from nature, and every figure in the picture is more or less a portrait of the model who sat for it. The old woman sitting at the tea-table by the cottage-door was a Mrs. King, who followed the respectable calling of a washerwoman. She was "no scholar," and hearing me repeat some lines one day when she was sitting, she said:

"Them's beautiful words."

"I should rather think they are; why, they are Shakespeare's." Then, seeing that she did not seem much wiser by the information, I said, "You know who Shakespeare was, don't you?"

"Yes, sir"—then, after a pause, "he was something in your line, wasn't he?"

With the exception of the old gipsy who is telling the fortune of a young person on the left of the composition, I had not much difficulty in finding appropriate models. I used my wife's sisters and some friends rather remorselessly, but, I think, with good effect.

I found an old gipsy in the street, and stopped her. She had something to sell—I forget what—and I offered to be a purchaser, but she must deliver the goods at my house. She came, accompanied by a small gipsy granddaughter. The articles were chosen and paid for.

"Now, good lady and gentleman, let the old gipsy tell your fortunes."

"After a while," said I, and I then proceeded to disclose my purpose. The old woman thought I must be joking. Who could want a likeness of her? If it had been "a long time back" it would have been different; she wasn't bad looking then, and so on. "Well," said I, "come into my studio, and I will explain matters to you." In one corner of the painting-room stood a full suit of armour, helmet, plume, and lance. The lay figure also was in full evidence, unfortunately. "Here you are, look," said I, showing her the picture, "this is a gipsy telling the fortune of this young maiden; and what I want is——" Hearing a rustling behind me, I turned round, and saw the old woman in full retreat towards the door, walking backwards as if in the presence of royalty, her eyes fixed with a terrified stare on the man in armour. "What's the matter?" said I. "Don't be foolish; *that* is not *a man*, it's only a suit of armour; there's nothing to be frightened at."

At that moment she bumped against the door, turned and opened it, and fled up the street, the little girl (her granddaughter) after her as terrified

as herself. Fortunately her address had been secured, and after many visits, munificent offers of reward, and incredible difficulty, she was induced to sit, but only on the understanding that "the *steel man* and the other horrid thing" were banished from the studio.

Having had very little practice in landscape-painting, I found great difficulty in the background of the picture. The large tree I managed pretty well, having made a careful study for it; but the bits of distance and the grass and sky bothered me terribly. Creswick, who had become my intimate friend—and who was good-nature personified—offered to mend the distance for me, and the result of his doing so was very satisfactory.

When the picture was shown (according to a custom common to the present time—witness "Show Sunday") to many of my friends, and others whom I scarcely knew, Mr. Creswick came amongst the rest, and went close to the picture to see how his work had prospered, when a man near him said, *sotto voce*, pointing to Creswick's own touches: "What a pity it is, Mr. Creswick, that these figure-painters don't study landscape more! Look how bad *that* is!"

Though my own ignorance of architecture, of animal life, and of landscape has on several occasions forced me to seek the assistance of my friends, I have always done so with great regret and a sense of humiliation; and I would strongly advise any youngster who may read this, to provide himself in early life with the knowledge which I neglected to obtain. And I hope that supposititious personage will,

at the same time, bear in mind that he must be as determined as I was to do nothing from fancy, but "seek until he finds" the object, dead or living, required for his work. I have never forgotten a conversation between two students, who were drawing behind me in the Antique School of the Academy. Said one to the other:

"Who did you get to sit for Nell Gwynne in your picture of Charles II. and that lady?".

"Miss Truman," said his friend. "You know her? Sits in the Life. A doosid good model."

"Yes, I know her," said the questioner. "Thought you'd had her. More like her than Nell Gwynne, ain't it? And the king—who sat for him?"

"Oh," was the reply, in a rather conceited tone, "I did him from nothing."

"And you've made him very like," said the candid friend.

The "Old English Merry-making" was hung in one of the angles of the middle room in Trafalgar Square, and was very successful. Previous to its going to the Exhibition, it was sold to a picture-dealer for three hundred and fifty pounds; since then it has changed hands many times, and is now an heirloom in a large collection in the north. If I were to repeat some of the flattering things that were said of my work, I should lay myself open to the charge of a performance on my own trumpet—a proceeding very foreign to my disposition—and if I mention one instance of generous praise, it is more for the purpose of opposing a common error into

which those who knew little or nothing of the great Turner were in the habit of falling. I have heard him described as surly, miserly, and ill-natured; as a man who never said an encouraging word to young men, and who was always a severe critic. I know nothing of the truth or falsehood of the miserly charge; but I do know that Turner's treatment of young men, and his kindness in expressing his opinion of all contemporary work, were in exact opposition to the general notion of his disposition. When the "Merry-making" was being exhibited, I was one of a large party at dinner at Vice-Chancellor Sir James Wigram's. All present were older and superior to myself, and I was startled out of my usual silence by Lee, R.A., who called to me from the other end of the table, asking if I knew what Turner had said of my picture.

"No, sir," said I, feeling myself turn red and pale alternately.

"He says it is beautifully drawn, well composed, and well coloured."

It is perfectly well known that the severest criticism Turner was ever heard to make, was upon a landscape of a brother Academician, whose works sometimes showed signs of weakness. Turner joined a group who were discussing a certain picture's shortcomings, and after hearing much unpleasant remark from which he dissented, he was forced to confess that a very bad passage in the picture, to which the malcontents drew his attention, "*was a poor bit.*"

If I write anything in these pages that I cannot

vouch for, I always warn my readers; and I am not certain whether Turner said to the gentleman who is usually called the great art critic, "My dear sir, if you only knew how difficult it is to paint even a decent picture, you would not say the severe things you do of those who *fail*." But this was attributed to him.

Another story of the great art critic is to the following effect: In the exercise of his high calling, friendship for a painter was not permitted to bias the critic's judgment of his pictures; and though David Roberts, R.A., was the intimate personal friend of the critic, his works found so little favour with the brilliant writer, that in one of the annual notices of the Exhibition they received a very savage castigation. Feeling, perhaps, that Roberts might find it difficult to reconcile an attempt to do him a serious injury with the usual interpretation of the term friendship, the critic wrote a private note to the artist, explaining his action on the hypothesis of a self-imposed duty to the public, and concluded his note by the expression of a hope that severe criticism would not interfere with the sincere feeling of friendship which the writer hoped would always exist, etc., etc. To this Roberts replied that the first time he met the critic he would give him a *sound thrashing;* and he ventured to "hope that a broken head would not interfere with the sincere feeling of friendship which he hoped would always exist," etc., etc.

When Turner overpraised my picture, I had never

spoken to him, and had seen him only on the varnishing-days at the Academy. At that time they extended generally to nearly a week, luncheon being served daily in the Council-room. Upon my first attending those luncheons, they were but slightly inferior in interest to the banquet to me, for I saw gathered round the table the greatest artists of the country, venerable figures most of them—in my eyes an assembly of gods. To listen to the talk of such men, to smile at their jokes, though never to presume to join in their conversation, was happiness enough for me. I can't say I find Associates so modest in these days; no doubt they have less reason for diffidence than I. As each, to me strange face, joined the table, Creswick, or Edwin Landseer—who had introduced himself to me—told me the name of its owner, and in this way I made my first acquaintance with the outward and visible forms of the Academicians.

On one occasion the luncheon was half over, when a new-comer arrived in a condition of considerable excitement.

"Why, Reinagle," said Turner, as the late arrival prepared to take a seat by the great landscape-painter, "where have you been? You were not in the rooms this morning."

"*Been*, sir?" said Reinagle (who was what is vulgarly called "half-cracked"); "I have been in the City. I have invented a railway to go up and down Cheapside. Omnibuses will be done away with. I shall make millions, and"—looking round the table—

"I will give you all commissions." Then looking aside at Turner, who sat next to him, "And I will give you a commission if you will tell me which way to hang the picture up when I get it."

"You may hang it just as you please," said Turner, "if you only pay for it."

Turner's extraordinary knowledge made him an admirable critic, though, as I said before, never a severe or unkind one; and he was always ready to share his knowledge with those who could profit by it. After he had said to me more than once, "Now, young gentleman, a glass of brown sherry"—people took wine with one another in those days—I ventured upon enough familiarity to ask him to look at my pictures, and many a time I have benefited by his wonderful knowledge of light and shade; and though I confess the drawing of the figures in his pictures is often funny enough, he was quick to see and point out errors in the action and drawing of mine, and more than once he has taken his brush and corrected a piece of foreshortening that had mastered me.

Turner was, without doubt, the greatest landscape-painter that ever lived; but so mysterious were some of his last productions, so utterly unlike nature to my eyes, that I should almost be inclined to agree with Reinagle, that they would look as well the wrong way up as the right way. Strange as it may sound, it is absolutely true that I have heard Turner ridicule some of his own later works quite as skilfully as the newspapers did. For example, at a dinner when I was present, a salad was offered to Turner, who called

the attention of his neighbour at the table (Jones Lloyd, afterwards Lord Overstone) to it in the following words: "Nice cool green that lettuce, isn't it? and the beetroot pretty red—not quite strong enough; and the mixture, delicate tint of yellow that. Add some mustard, and then you have one of my pictures." It was, and always will be, a puzzle to me how a man whose earlier works are the wonder and admiration of all who see them, could have reconciled himself to the production of beautiful phantasmagoria, representing nothing in the "heavens above, or on the earth beneath." And what is still more wonderful is, that people can be found to admire and buy them at such enormous prices.

An erroneous notion prevailed that Turner occasionally had painted the *whole* of some of his pictures during varnishing-days. To those who know anything of the time required to produce a picture, the idea is absurd; but I have seen great effects in the way of change and completion produced by Turner in a very short time, and that, sometimes, to the injury of neighbouring works, as the following anecdote will prove: In one of the angles of the middle room there hung, in one of the Exhibitions, a long, narrow, delicately-coloured picture by David Roberts —"A View of Edinburgh;" and next to it, in immediate juxtaposition, was a picture which Turner called "Masaniello and the Fisherman's Ring," with the inevitable quotation from the "Fallacies of Hope." When first placed on the wall, Masaniello's

queer figure was relieved by a pale gray sky, the whole effect being almost as gray and quiet as Roberts's picture. Turner was a very short man, with a large head, and a face usually much muffled "to protect it from the draughts" for which the rooms were celebrated. Both he and Roberts stood upon boxes, and worked silently at their respective pictures. I found myself close to them, painting some figures into a landscape by Creswick. I watched my neighbours from time to time, and if I could discover no great change in the aspect of "Edinburgh," there was no doubt whatever that "Masaniello" was rapidly undergoing a treatment which was very damaging to its neighbour without a compensating improvement to itself. The gray sky had become an intense blue, and was every instant becoming so blue that even Italy could scarcely be credited with it. Roberts moved uneasily on his box-stool. Then, with a sidelong look at Turner's picture, he said in the broadest Scotch:

"You are making that varra blue."

Turner said nothing; but added more and more ultramarine. This was too much.

"I'll just tell ye what it is, Turner, you're just playing the deevil with my picture, with that sky—ye never saw such a sky as that!"

Turner moved his muffler on one side, looked down at Roberts, and said:

"You attend to your business, and leave me to attend to mine."

And to this hour "Masaniello" remains—now in

the cellars of the National Gallery—with the bluest sky ever seen in a picture, and never seen out of one.

I may add another anecdote of Turner, for the truth of which I can vouch. In Rathbone Place there used to be a print-shop, kept by a man whose name I forget; but he was well known as a very superior person to the ordinary printseller of that period, having a thorough knowledge of his business and a great love of Art in all its forms. He was of course, therefore, a great admirer of Turner, whose "Liber Studiorum" he appreciated; and whenever one of that wonderful set of engravings could be found, the Rathbone Place connoisseur bought it if possible. In some way or other a fine plate from the "Liber" series came into his possession, much damaged by stains and rough usage. Feeling that it could scarcely be further injured, he placed it in his shop-window. In passing one day Turner saw the damaged print, bounced into the shop, and fell foul of the printseller.

"It's a confounded shame to treat an engraving like that!" pointing to the window. "What can you be thinking about to go and destroy a good thing—for it *is* a good thing, mind you!"

"*I* destroy it!" said the shopman in a rage. "What do you mean by saying I destroyed it? and who the devil are you, I should like to know? I didn't ask you to buy it, did I? You don't look as if you could understand a good print when you see one. *I* destroy it! Bless my soul, I bought it

just as it is, and I would rather keep it till Doomsday than sell it to you; and why you should put yourself out about it, I can't think."

"Why, I did it," said Turner.

"Did what!—did you spoil it? If you did, you deserve——"

"No, no, man! my name's Turner, and I did the drawing, and engraved the plate from it."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the printseller. "Is it possible that you are the great Turner? Well, sir, I have long desired to see you; and now that I have seen you, I hope I shall never see you again, for a more disagreeable person I have seldom met."

Until Mr. Ruskin opened the eyes of the public to Turner's merits, his pictures rarely sold, and when they did sell they only fetched small prices. Mr. Munro, of Novar, at whose house in Hamilton Place I once met Turner at dinner, possessed several of his pictures, for each of which he had paid, as he told me himself, two hundred pounds; amongst them was that magnificent picture of the "Grand Canal at Venice," which was purchased by Lord Dudley, after Mr. Munro's death, for something under eight thousand guineas. Others of his works, from the Bicknell and Munro collections, fetched correspondingly large sums.

Mr. Munro, a Scottish laird, was also an artist of some ability, and the possessor of many fine old masters, as well as of modern works. Turner lived in Queen Anne Street, and at the back of his house

he had built a large gallery, and had completely filled it with unsold works, numbers of which now form part of the collection in the National Gallery.

I can never forget the woe-begone appearance of the long gallery to which Turner had consigned his pictures. The walls were almost paperless, the roof far from weather-proof, and the whole place desolate in the extreme.

"Though the very look of the place was enough to give a man a cold," said Munro to me when I met him one Sunday afternoon, "I found Turner an hour ago crouching over a morsel of fire in the gallery, with a dreadful cold upon him, muffled up and miserable."

"Yes, here I am," said Turner, "with all these unsaleable things about me. I wish to Heaven I could get rid of them; I would sell them cheap to anybody who would take them where I couldn't see them any more."

"Well," said Munro, "what will you take for the lot?"

"Oh, I don't know; you may make me an offer if you like."

Munro told me he took but a few minutes to look at the pictures and make a mental calculation, and then he offered to write a cheque for twenty-five thousand pounds for the whole of them. Turner's bright-blue eyes glittered for a moment. He turned to the fire and seemed absorbed in thought, and then addressing Munro, he said:

"Go and take a walk, and come back in an hour,

and I will give you an answer. Thank you for the offer."

"It is now about time to go back to Queen Anne Street," said Munro; "so I wish you good-day."

A short time after this conversation I again met Mr. Munro.

"Well," said I, "am I to congratulate you on the purchase of the Turners?"

"No," replied Munro. "When I got back to the old man, his first words were:

"'Hullo! what, you here again? I am very ill; my cold is very bad.'"

"Well," said Munro, "have you decided; will you accept my offer?"

"No, I won't—I can't. I believe I'm going to die, and I intend to be buried in those two" (pointing to the "Carthage" and "Sun rising through Mist," which now hang near the Claudes in the National Gallery, being placed in their proximity by Turner's especial request). "So I can't; besides, I can't be bothered—good evening."

It is recorded that Turner expressed to Chantrey his determination to be buried in these two famous pictures. Chantrey's comment on this morbid intention was: "Indeed. Well, if that bright idea is carried out we will dig you up again, and unroll you as they do the mummies."

For two or three years after I was elected Associate, a dinner took place when the Exhibition closed, at which any exhibitor for the year could be present, provided he was introduced by a member

and was willing to pay a guinea for the privilege The modern soirée is now given in lieu of those dinners; but those dinners were very pleasant meetings. The R.A.'s seemed to lay aside a little of their dignity, and most of them were very courteous—if sometimes slightly patronizing—to the outsiders. Those who could sing or tell a good story—and some of them could do both—willingly added to the general hilarity. Edwin Landseer sang delightfully, and was one of the best story-tellers I ever knew. We had speeches, too, and on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, a speech from Turner. I fear a written description will give but a faint notion of that memorable oration, the only one he was ever known to deliver. The stammering, the long pauses, the bewildering mystery of it, required to be witnessed for any adequate idea to be formed. In writing I fear it is impossible to convey it. It was not unlike the most incomprehensible of his later pictures, mixed up with the "Fallacies of Hope." He looked earnestly at the guests before he began, and then spoke as follows: "Gentlemen, I see some——" (pause, and another look round) "new faces at this—table—— Well—do you—do any of you—I mean—Roman History——" (a pause). "There is no doubt, at least I hope not, that you are acquainted—no, unacquainted—that is to say—of course, why not?—you must know something of the—old—ancient—Romans." (Loud applause.) "Well, sirs, those old people—the Romans I allude to—were a warlike set of people—yes, *they*

were—because they came over here, you know, and had to do a good deal of fighting before they arrived, and after too. Ah! they did; and they always fought in a phalanx—know what that is?" ("Hear, hear," said some one.) "Do you know, sir? Well, if you don't, I will tell you. They stood shoulder to shoulder, and won everything." (Great cheering.) "Now, then, I have done with the Romans, and I come to the old man and the bundle of sticks—Æsop, ain't it?—fables, you know—all right—yes, to be sure. Well, when the old man was dying he called his sons—I forget how many there were of 'em—a good lot, seven or eight perhaps—and he sent one of them out for a bundle of sticks. 'Now,' says the old man, 'tie up those sticks, tight,' and it was done so. Then he says, says he, 'Look here, young fellows, you stick to one another like those sticks; work all together,' he says, 'then you are formidable. But if you separate, and one go one way, and one another, you may just get broke one after another. Now mind what I say,' he says——" (a very long pause, filled by intermittent cheering). "Now," resumed the speaker, "you are wondering what I am driving at" (indeed we were). "I will tell you. Some of you young fellows will one day take our places, and become members of this Academy. Well, you are a lot of sticks" (loud laughter). "What on earth are you all laughing at? Don't like to be called sticks?—wait a bit. Well, then, what do you say to being called Ancient Romans? What I want you to understand is just

this—never mind what anybody calls you. When you become members of this institution you must fight in a phalanx—no splits—no quarrelling—one mind—one object—the good of the Arts and the Royal Academy."

It will be seen that Turner had an idea which he desired to impress upon us, and it was not till he got to the end of his speech that we could imagine, as he said himself, what he was "driving at." Turner died in 1851. He had been ailing for some time, and had gone to Ramsgate in the hope of improving his health; a slight change for the better took place, owing, as Turner thought, to the skill of a local doctor, and the sick man went back to his lodgings in Chelsea, where his illness returned upon him with great virulence. The Ramsgate practitioner was sent for, and without a moment's delay he went to the bedside of the dying painter, whose condition he saw instantly was hopeless.

"Well, doctor," said Turner, "you can cure me if anybody can. What's the verdict? Tell me the truth."

"I am afraid I must beg you to lose no time in any worldly arrangements you desire to make."

"Wait a bit," said Turner; "you have had nothing to eat and drink yet, have you?"

"No; but that's of no consequence."

"Yes, it is. Go downstairs and you will find some refreshment; and there is some fine brown sherry—don't spare it—and then come up and see me again."

The doctor refreshed himself and then returned to his patient.

"Now then," said Turner, "what is it? Do you still think so badly of my case? Wasn't that good sherry?"

"I grieve to say I cannot alter my opinion."

Turner put his hand out of bed, pressed that of the doctor, turned his face to the wall, and never spoke again. Later in the day he died, his death making a vacancy in the Academy ranks, which I was elected to fill—how unworthily, in comparison with my predecessor, no one knows better than I.

The art patron is often a strange creature; he places, very justly, but little reliance on his own judgment. "He knows what he likes," but whether the object of his liking is worthy of that distinction or not, is a matter about which he is alarmingly uncertain. It too often happens that until a picture has received the "hall-mark" of the picture-dealer the collector is not satisfied; but after that, he is often ready to pay for his ignorant incredulity in the form of a great advance on the price for which he might have acquired the work. To illustrate this from my own experience: a distinguished artist friend of mine painted a large picture, for which he asked fifteen hundred pounds. When the work was nearly finished, one of the Manchester merchant princes called to see it, admired, and inquired the price.

"Too much," said the collector; "give you twelve."

"No you won't," said the artist.

"Don't put yourself out."

"I am not put out; but I should just like to ask you, if, when a shopkeeper asks you a price for an article, you make a point of offering him a good deal less than he asks?"

"Yes, very often," was the reply. "Won't you accept my offer?"

"Certainly not."

A few days later the collector called again, and repeated his offer, which was again declined. On one of the "show" days the picture was instantly purchased by a great firm of picture-dealers for fifteen hundred pounds, and sold before it was seen by the public for three thousand pounds to the man who had refused to pay the artist his own more modest price.

Then there is the collector who is always ready to buy something out of his reach.

"My dear sir, how I regret my folly in not possessing myself of your beautiful picture of last year! Could you not make me a copy of it?"

"I fear not, for the owner of the picture objects to copies."

This conversation would take place in the presence of the picture of the year, which might be at that moment unsold, to be repeated in almost similar words the year after.

Is it to be wondered at, then, that artists prefer the dealer, who knows his own mind, to the patron who does not? Turner, on the other hand, detested

dealers; he would have none of them. And a story is told of one well-known picture merchant, who was determined—though he was aware of Turner's dislike to the fraternity—to see the famous gallery in Queen Anne Street. Forgetting—or perhaps not knowing—that his card must be given to the servant before admission could be obtained, or believing, possibly, that the maid merely took it as a matter of form, he was proceeding leisurely upstairs into the gallery, when he found himself pulled backwards by his coat-tails, and on looking round saw the irate face of the great artist; who, without a word, pointed to the front-door, through which the dealer made an ignominious retreat.

CHAPTER XII.

DINNER-PARTY AT LORD NORTHWICK'S.

AMONG the patrons and lovers of art, the late Lord Northwick was a conspicuous figure; his gallery at Cheltenham was filled with very questionable old masters, and some few good modern ones. When I saw his collection in 1846, I cannot recall a single fine ancient picture; and the two modern ones I remember best were Maclise's "Strongbow" (now in the Dublin National Gallery) and my old friend Ward's picture of the "Fall of Clarendon"—a work I had the great satisfaction of recommending successfully to Lord Northwick. This nobleman was one of those who never give commissions without knowing for what sum the order may make them responsible; and as it is almost impossible for a painter to say at what value he can safely estimate his work until it is completed, a commission from Lord Northwick was not greatly cared for in times when purchasers were plentiful; and I attribute a dislike to myself, which I very soon discovered in the old gentleman, to my refusal to name a sum, from a small sketch that I showed him, for a large

picture which was to be painted from it. His dislike, however, did not prevent his inviting me to stay a few days at Thirlstane House, Cheltenham, accompanied by my friends Frost (an admirable painter of poetic subjects) and E. M. Ward, both afterwards Royal Academicians. Ward was a well-read man, an admirable talker, and, unfortunately, a wonderful mimic; for in the old lord was found food for mimicry almost impossible to resist, and it is to be feared that some of our attempts—for I plead guilty to attempts, inferior though they were when compared with such a master in the art as Ward—must have been overheard by the servants, who were all greatly attached to their master; if so, the coolness shown in the end to all of us was not to be wondered at, and I must say it was well deserved.

When a young man, Lord Northwick had been placed at the Court of Ferdinand of Naples, in the position of attaché in the suite of the English Ambassador during the great French war; when he became also the intimate friend of the King and Queen of Naples, and of Sir William and Lady Hamilton.

I well remember, after a dinner-party at Thirlstane House, Ward's loudly-expressed regret that a shorthand writer had not been there, so that the many anecdotes we were told might have been preserved. Alas for the frailness of memory! How much do I deplore now that I can remember so little of the scenes described to us, in which Lord Nelson, for one, figured so often! Lord Northwick did not

believe that the friendship for Lady Hamilton which Nelson professed, extended beyond the bounds of ordinary friendship, and nothing made him so angry as any suggestion to the contrary.

"Poor dear Lady Hamilton!" he would say in his shrill voice. "A truer wife, a warmer friend, or a better woman never breathed. Why, if she had not prevailed upon the King of Naples to victual the English Fleet—entirely by her influence—the Battle of the Nile could not have been fought; and it is to the eternal disgrace of this country that the poor dear creature was allowed to die in destitution."

As a sample of what has been lost, I will repeat, as well as I can recall it, Lord Northwick's account of the execution of Caracciolo.

"Though an admiral in the service of King Ferdinand," said the old lord, "he deserted his colours and assisted the French, and he was justly condemned to death. Of course Nelson could have saved him" (this in reply to a guest at the table), "but why should he? I see good reason why he shouldn't. On the day fixed for the execution, Caracciolo asked to be shot. He was refused, and hanged at the yard-arm of a ship that he had commanded. I was dining on board the *Agamemnon* with Nelson; the other guests were Ferdinand, the Queen, and the Hamiltons. I knew the execution was imminent, but not the precise time fixed for it. We were at dessert when a gun was fired. At that instant Lady Hamilton filled her glass, and, standing up,

said in solemn tones, 'So perish all the enemies of Naples!' Nelson motioned me to the cabin-window. I looked out and saw the body of the traitor Caracciolo swinging from the yard-arm some hundreds of yards away. 'I am d——d glad that fellow has got his deserts!' said Nelson." Lord Northwick saw by the shocked countenances of some of his guests that Nelson's remark had surprised and disgusted them. "Oh, you are shocked at Nelson's swearing. It was nothing. He always swore at everything and anything — never opened his mouth without an oath coming out of it. If it was a fine day, it was 'a —— fine day.' Was he quite well? 'Yes, he was ——' (strong adjective) 'well,' and so on. And if his oaths, when he spoke of the French, could have taken effect, the whole nation would have gone to the devil." The old lord continued: "The King and Queen remained that night on board the *Agamemnon*, and next morning, when Ferdinand was shaving in his cabin, we were startled by hearing him call out in a loud and agitated voice, 'Vieni qui, vieni qui!' The King was standing by the cabin-window, ghastly pale, and unable to speak. He pointed to something in the sea. I looked out, and under the window lay the body of Caracciolo, his face upturned, the eyes wide open, looking at me. I shall never forget that sight.

"Poor dear Lady Hamilton! the last time I saw her was at Frascati's gambling-rooms in Paris. She was playing furiously. Nelson sat next to her. He was fast asleep, with his head on her shoulder."

"Did you ever see Bonaparte, my lord?" said Ward.

"Only once. I was at a reception at the Tuileries when he was First Consul. He spoke to me, but I don't remember what he said—a commonplace remark, no doubt."

It seemed strange to us that "poor dear Lady Hamilton" should have been so completely forgotten by the devoted friends she possessed, according to Lord Northwick, none of whom, so far as we could learn, took any notice of her after Nelson's death. Certainly Lord Northwick never did, as the last time he saw her Nelson was alive, though asleep.

Lord Northwick showed us every engraving that had been executed from great numbers of pictures painted from Lady Hamilton; many lovely heads by Romney amongst them; and many a sigh heaved the old gentleman as he produced them.

There is no truth, I think, in the story often repeated to me, that Lady Hamilton ever sat in the Life School of the Royal Academy. Wilkie met her in society once or twice, when she posed with drapery in imitation of antique statuary. He expressed his disappointment with her appearance, which he described as fat and vulgar, with manners to match.

At the time of our visit to Cheltenham, the Corn-Law question was raging with great fury, and Lord Northwick made such long and tiresome speeches to us on the subject that we often wished him in the

House of Lords, where his eloquence, strange to say, was never heard. He almost wept over the imminent ruin of the farmers, and the possible reduction of all rents; and his words, "Protection to native industry," repeated again and again in a singing tone, enabled Ward to reproduce the very voice of the speaker, as he proved on many a winter's evening when, in reply to "Come, Ward, let us have a protection speech from Lord Northwick," he would improvise, how admirably! giving us the sentiments as well as the manner of the noble protectionist. After we had been some days at Cheltenham, we were joined by a young artist named Huskisson, who had painted some original pictures of considerable merit, and also some copies from old masters and others, of extraordinary exactness. Huskisson was a very common young man, entirely uneducated. I doubt if he could read and write; the very tone of his voice was dreadful. He never could have heard of English grammar; and though it might be supposed that he would be ill at ease at a dinner-party at Thirlstane House—where nearly every guest, male or female, had handles to their names—he was always perfectly self-possessed, and, judging from occasional bursts of laughter which followed some of his remarks, he greatly entertained his high-born neighbours at the table.

In the midst of a silence that will sometimes prevail at a dinner-party, Lord Northwick, who sat at some distance from this rough specimen of our profession, called to him, and said:

"Mr. Huskisson, was it not a picture-dealer who bought your last 'Fairy' picture?"

"No, my lord! no, my lord!" replied Huskisson. "It were a gent."

I looked at the faces of some of the guests, but not even a smile was visible; instead, there appeared to me expressions of a kind of tender interest in the strange young man. Within a year of our visit, Huskisson died, much to my regret, for I feel sure, in his case, death cut short a brilliant career. A picture by him, full of poetic fancy, was engraved for the *Art Journal.* Scarcely anyone who may read these lines will remember the young man. I fear his performances were too few to "keep his memory green."

We left Cheltenham in a carriage-and-four for another house belonging to Lord Northwick, called, I think, Northwick. On the way we called on Lord Ellenborough, who had just returned from governing India: he was from home. As we drove through the grounds, we passed great quantities of laurels, and Ward inquired if those were the laurels Lord Ellenborough had gained in India. If looks could kill, Ward would have died in that carriage, for the old lord not only bestowed a murderous one upon the punster, but he added:

"Mr. Ward, you have painted pictures of Dr. Johnson, and I presume you are acquainted with the sentiments of that great man in respect of puns."

Said Ward:

"Oh yes! I know, my lord; but that was because he couldn't make a pun himself."

"I differ from you, sir; Dr. Johnson could say anything or do anything. The last thing he would have uttered would have been a poor witticism at the expense of a friend of his host."

"Well, but my lord, I beg pardon; I don't think what I said could be called a pun."

"Sufficiently like one, sir, to be very objectionable."

At Northwick there was a very old butler, older in appearance than his master; he had been in the family all his life—indeed I was told that he had accompanied Lord Northwick in his first pony-rides, events which must have happened at least seventy or eighty years before our visit. The meeting of master and servant was interesting, even touching.

"Don't let that old chap catch you taking off my lord," said I to Ward. "I don't think he would approve."

Though the old butler was very feeble, he insisted on placing the dishes on the table at dinner. All went well so long as the burden was light, but a haunch of venison proved beyond the old man's strength; the dish—a heavy silver one—slipped from his fingers, and the venison fell upon the floor.

"He is too old," Lord Northwick whispered to me. "I can't bear to tell him so, dear old man. He is for ever dropping something or other. It is a pity, though; I should have liked you Londoners to have tasted that venison."

Although the venison was denied to us, we had a dish cooked from the furry covering of the deer's horns, made into a rich mess, the like of which I had never seen before, nor have I since, and devoutly do I hope I never shall see it again; taste it, I never would. One more feeble pun, and I take leave of Lord Northwick. Frost eat some of the strange compound just described, and when his trouble was over, he whispered to me, "This is not cheap and nasty, but *deer* and nasty."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON SUBJECTS.

My own reading lay chiefly in books suggestive of subjects for pictures—Sterne, Goldsmith, Molière, Cervantes, and the "Spectator" taking the lead of all others. Shakespeare inspired me with terror as well as admiration.

It was vain for me to hope to rival Leslie, and therefore dangerous to come into competition with the painter of the "Dinner at Page's House," the "Autolycus," and "Perdita," now in the Sheepshanks Gallery at South Kensington. I have never meddled with Shakespeare without regretting my temerity, for though I have painted several pictures from different plays, I cannot recall one that will add to my reputation. From the "Spectator," however, I did better, "Sir Roger de Coverley and the Saracen's Head," an admirable subject, proving one of the best of my pictures drawn from books. The incident may be briefly described. An old servant of Sir Roger's becomes the landlord of an inn, and to do honour to his master, he has the Knight's head painted and put up for a sign.

Sir Roger, hearing of this compliment, sends for the man, and tells him the honour is more than he deserves, or, indeed, than anyone deserves, under the rank of a duke, and the sign must be altered; and he, Sir Roger, will be at the "charge of it." Accordingly an artist is procured, who, by the addition of a terrible frown and general wildness of aspect, transforms the Knight's likeness into a Saracen's head.

When the alteration is completed, Sir Roger, accompanied by his friend the "Spectator" (Addison), pays a visit to the inn, and the sign is produced for the inspection of the visitors. Then, says the "Spectator," "I could not forbear discovering greater Expressions of Mirth than ordinary upon the Appearance of this monstrous Face, under which, notwithstanding it was made to frown and stare in a most extraordinary manner, I could still discover a distant Resemblance of my old Friend.

"Sir Roger, upon seeing me laugh, desired me to tell him truly if I thought it possible for People to know him in that Disguise. I at first kept my usual Silence; but upon the Knight's conjuring me to tell him whether it was not still more like himself than a *Saracen*, I composed my Countenance in the best manner I could, and replied, '*That much might be said on both sides.*'"

I found many would-be purchasers of this picture —it eventually became the property of a Mr. Andrews, of York, who had made a fortune in the railway mania so prevalent in 1847.

With the best intention possible, Mr. Andrews, who was a great friend of Hudson, the Railway King, induced me to take shares in a certain line. The property of the Company was destroyed for a time by the panic that affected all railway interests; and I had the misfortune of seeing the shares of twenty-five pounds each, upon every one of which eight pounds ten had been paid, quoted in the *Times* at half-a-crown apiece. Mr. Andrews formed a small collection of pictures mainly under my advice; he was ruined, and his pictures were sold at Christie's, when a good profit was made upon them, but far from sufficient to satisfy his creditors; and this truly honourable and most amiable man died broken-hearted.

The "Spectator" inspired me with a subject for a large picture of a much more important character than the "Saracen's Head." Readers of Addison will remember the paper in which Sir Roger has to deal with a charge of witchcraft against a certain Moll White, who is accused of causing dire mischief to all and sundry of Sir Roger's tenants, and of "making maids spit pins." And she was brought before the Knight to answer for her crimes.

My intention was—as my first sketch proved—to represent Sir Roger himself, Moll White, and a sick virgin, on the precise lines of the "Spectator's" paper; but further reflection led me to amplify the theme, and I finally determined to take the incident in the "Spectator" as a peg upon which I might hang a story of deeper interest. So, in an old English

mansion with oriel window and tapestried walls, I placed a lovelorn damsel, bewitched, indeed, by a handsome young forester in Lincoln green, instead of by a frightened old woman who is vehemently accused by the mother of the girl of having caused the change in her daughter's health and spirits, so alarming to her friends, notably to her old grandfather, to whom she clings for protection when she finds herself in the presence of the grave magistrate —a type of the Elizabethan nobleman—who listens to the outpouring of the mother in dignified silence.

A clerk writes down the evidence; the magistrate's daughter leans on her father's chair, interested in the scene; whilst her little child steals a fearful glance at the dreadful witch. The real cause of the mischief stands at a little distance twisting his hat, uncertain whether to reveal himself, and still more uncertain that his doing so would save the old woman from the pond or the stake. A black cat, the witch's familiar, is held above her head; and additional evidence is furnished by a woman at the room door, who brings a sick child whose illness can only be owing to the devilries of the old woman.

This picture and the "Saracen's Head" were my contributions to the Exhibition of 1848. "The Old Woman accused of Witchcraft" was bought by Mr. Miller, of Preston, for five hundred guineas. Horrocks and Miller's "Long Cloth" is known, I believe, throughout the world. An intimacy, such as so frequently exists between artist and patron, arose between Mr. Miller and me. I spent many happy

hours with him at Preston. He was one of the truest gentlemen, and the warmest lover of art for art's sake, that I have ever known. He died long ago, while comparatively a young man, leaving his collection intact in the possession of his widow.

Though I was so fortunate as to be the first of the band of rapidly-rising artist friends to receive the honours of the Academy, E. M. Ward, Egg, Stone, Phillip, and others were running "neck and neck" with me.

Ward's admirable picture of the "South Sea Bubble," now in the National Gallery, secured the painter's election as an Associate the year following my own.

Egg painted an excellent picture of "Queen Elizabeth surrounded by Ladies and Courtiers." Whether apocryphal or not, the subject was one well suited to pictorial art. It is said that the Queen had banished looking-glasses for many years; but one day, towards the close of her life, her curiosity got the better of her fears, and she sent one of her ladies for a mirror. Judging from the expression of the withered old face, as it was turned away from the sad sight reflected in the glass, all illusion had vanished, and a terror-stricken conviction that every trace of youth had flown, was at last as palpable to the old Queen as it had long been to everybody else. This picture greatly added to Egg's reputation. It was purchased by Mr. Miller, and hangs at this moment as a companion to my "Witch" in the collection at Preston.

Egg continued to produce pictures of great excellence, the best, perhaps, being "Peter the Great's First Sight of Catherine" (afterwards Empress), a subject which I found and presented to Egg—an act of generosity, I confess, much repented of afterwards, for it was one I should dearly like to have ventured upon myself; indeed, I had made many pen-and-ink sketches of the composition, and what "amazing devil of generosity"—as Dickens said, when I told him of my gift of the subject to Egg—prompted such a disinterested act of good-nature I cannot tell. Egg and I were fellow-students at Sass's Academy, and fast friends through life—through *his* life, I should say, for he died in his prime, but not until he had attained the full honours of the Royal Academy. I shall have something to say later on of charming meetings at Ivy Cottage (Egg's house), in Black Lion Lane (now Queen's Road), Bayswater, where at delightful dinners I met Dickens over and over again, immortal John Leech, Mark Lemon, John Forster (afterwards biographer of Dickens), O'Neil, Webster, Phillip, Mulready, Stone, Mr. Justice Hawkins—then so gentle and quiet, that I can scarcely credit the fiery judge with being the same man—and many others, most, indeed nearly all, of whom have since "joined the majority."

John Phillip—afterwards called Phillip of Spain, from the many wonderful subjects he drew from that country—came to London a very raw Scotch lad, and became a student of the Academy, where I first made

his acquaintance, and where he very soon gave proof of great natural genius. He was a *protégé* of Lord Panmure, and pupil of Mr. T. M. Joy, a portrait-painter and intense admirer of Sir Thomas Lawrence. Phillip caught the fever, painted with great facility before he could draw, and produced portraits so like the work of Lawrence that they might easily have been mistaken for indifferent pictures by that fashionable genius. I have an unfinished one of myself that would prove the truth of this; and in the likeness done of Egg, Phillip managed to include all Lawrence's faults and many of his merits. It would be impossible to conceive greater contrasts than would be afforded by a comparison of Phillip's earliest works with his latest. He was, at one time, tainted with Pre-Raphaelitism. His first pictures displayed a grasp of character, but *colour*—one of the charms of his later works—was conspicuous by its absence. It was only after the second visit to Spain that Phillip's real power showed itself. Then came, year after year; up to the day of his death, pictures of extraordinary beauty; which, in spite of the caprice of fashion, will be eventually considered glories of the British school. Though the claims of Phillip for Academic honours were long delayed, he took the lead, in my opinion, of all the young men, except Millais (not excepting myself, of course), who were added to the Academic ranks in my time.

Frank Stone became an Associate somewhat late in life, and died before the higher honour (recently so worthily attained by his son Marcus) reached him.

It was impossible to know Stone intimately without loving him ; for myself, I can say that I never knew any man for whom I had so warm an affection. No fair-weather friend was he, but true as steel when friendly countenance might be sorely needed. Still, I confess there were drawbacks to the enjoyment of Stone's society. It was enough for anyone to advance an opinion, for Stone to differ from it. The first time I dined with him at Dickens's, having then had little or no experience of his peculiarity in that respect, I foolishly got into an argument with him—something about Waterloo—and finding there was no hope of agreement, and that we were boring everybody present, I allowed him to settle the matter in his own fashion ; but he was not satisfied.

"Well," said he, "are you convinced?"

"What about?" said I.

"Why, that you have been making a series of statements for which you had no foundation in fact."

"Yes, if you like," I replied.

After dinner, Dickens took me on one side, and inquired if I had known Stone long.

"No, a very short time."

"I thought so. Now let me give you a little piece of advice; a better fellow than Stone never lived, but he is always in the right about every earthly thing, and if you talk till Doomsday you will not convince him to the contrary, so I advise you not to try any more;" and I never did.

CHAPTER XIV.

PICTURE-SEEING IN BELGIUM AND HOLLAND.

Egg, Stone, and I went to Belgium and Holland for a few days, for the sole purpose of picture-seeing, and then the constant intercourse made Dickens's advice a little difficult to follow; but we got on very well until the money question cropped up. I was the only one of the party who spoke French. All arrangements and all payments, therefore, were made by me—a settlement being effected by my informing each of my fellow-travellers of the extent of his indebtedness to me at the end of every three or four days. Stone insisted on a detailed account of every item. This I declined to give him, when he thus addressed me:

"My dear Frith, if you think my desire for details arises from any doubt of your honesty, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; but I really must insist on knowing exactly how the money has gone."

My answer was:

"My dear Stone, I will not give you a detailed account of the way in which I have spent your

money; but I will tell you what you are indebted to me at the end of our time."

"That will not do for me," was the reply.

"Won't it?" said I, a happy thought having struck me. "Then just listen to this: I will tell you what you owe me, and you may pay it or not, just as you like." This settled the matter, and my little bill was met.

The following extracts from letters written at this time to my mother may interest:

"Bruges, Sunday, July 7, 1850.

"You may remember when Egg and I went up the Rhine some years ago, we passed through Bruges and Antwerp, and were then told there were some fine old pictures in a convent by one of the very early Flemish painters. This artist flourished the sword as well as the pencil, and he was seriously wounded at the battle of Nancy; he was taken to the hospital of the nunnery, and lay at the point of death for many months. At last the care and good treatment of the worthy nuns prevailed, and his wounds healed. To show the strength of his gratitude, he painted and presented to them several of his largest and best works—all Scriptural subjects, of course—and they have remained in the possession of the sisterhood ever since, much to their profit; for the Exhibition has proved so attractive, and has existed for so long, that the convent is the richest in Belgium.

"We were now—1850—informed that there was another collection of pictures well worth a visit, but

it was only to be seen after service. So after dinner we got a man to show us the way, and very soon we pulled the convent bell; but to no purpose. It wanted still some twenty minutes to the proper hour (so a woman screamed out for our information), and there was nothing for it but to wander about and kill the time. When we rang again, the large doors opened—no one could see by whom; we entered, and they closed behind us in the same mysterious manner.

"Across a courtyard, and there was another bell to ring; this time the door-opener was visible enough in the form of a young nun, very pretty, the meekest, mildest-looking creature. She stood looking down with her hands crossed while we walked in. Without a word she motioned us to the room where the pictures were, shut the door upon us, and vanished; and so nipped in the bud some most elegant speeches that were brewing for her entertainment. A single glance sufficed to show that we had been deceived; for the collection displayed in that holy place every vice of which a picture could be guilty. There were a good many, but they were bad without exception. There was nothing to stop for; but how to get away from them! the doors were shut, and there was nothing for it but patience, and the hope that the pretty nun would reappear. At last Egg discovered one picture not quite so bad as the rest, and he called Stone and me to look at it. How long we had been studying it I can't tell, but happening to look round, I was not a little

startled at an apparition behind me, in the shape of an old, ugly, grim nun, standing as silent as a statue. How she came there puzzles me to this moment. I was so taken aback that I forgot my French, and spoke to her in English, though what I said I know no more than she did. Her head shook slowly, implying, I suppose, that the study of the English language had been neglected in her education. She then turned quietly round in a dreadfully ghost-like manner, and stalked away. In less time than I take to write about it, another apparition presented itself; but this time it was our pretty nun again, who immediately informed us, with the smile of an angel, that she spoke a little English, but very 'leetel.'

"Stone (who, being by far the best-looking of the trio, did all the gallantry during the journey) here struck in with the elegant speech he had prepared some time before; but his ideas didn't flow in their usual limpid course, which somewhat surprised me, till I saw that the old nun had followed her pretty sister very closely, and had fixed her leaden eyes upon poor Stone, to the utter destruction of his fine speech.

"The pretty nun and her body-guard accompanied us into the chapel, which smelt overpoweringly of incense. There were the cushions that seemed as if they had just been knelt upon; the wax candles, the offerings, etc. The old nun instantly went down on her knees, pulled out a little black book, and prayed fervently as if she felt she had no time to lose. The

pretty nun told us in the most charmingly simple manner that they never went out, they knew nothing about the world, they spent their time in teaching poor children; and that their chapel was dedicated to 'The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.' I shall never forget her way of pronouncing the last few words; there was a timid solemnity about her broken English inexpressibly charming. As soon as the old nun (who I forgot to tell you had a beard) saw we were leaving the chapel, she made an end of her prayers, shut up the little black book, and followed us closely. There was nothing more to see, so I prepared to pay, and at the door I put a franc, the usual sum given, into the pretty nun's hand. She turned very red, and I saw there was something wrong. The old nun, who had her leaden eye on everything, gave her a nod; and then she came up to me and said in her pretty way that each person must pay half a franc, and as there were three of us, I had given too little. "It was for the poor children," she said. So instead of another half-franc, we gave her a whole one, and so came away. . . ."

"Ghent, July, 1850.

"After Bruges we went to Ghent, where there are many pictures, and, as a city, it is particularly interesting. The people at the hotel at Bruges recommended us to an hotel at Ghent, and as we had been uncommonly well treated at the former place we followed their advice, and the consequence was we were located in the best hotel in the place.

Ghent, as you perhaps know, *is* the principal town of Flanders, and *was* one of the richest cities in the world, famous for its manufactures of all sorts, especially cloths, and for the vigorous stand constantly made by the merchants against unpalatable taxes and against what they justly considered the misgovernment of the Counts of Flanders. Many times were they defeated, and as often had to send the principal offenders, with ropes round their necks and only covered by their shirts, to beg for mercy from such men as Charles the Bold, and also from the Spaniards, who then held all the Low Countries. The most beautiful remains of domestic architecture to be found in Ghent are the houses built by the Spaniards. I could fancy I traced something Moorish in some of the Spanish buildings. The wicked Duke d'Alva, who united in his disposition the most ferocious cruelty with the most intense religious bigotry, has left his mark on Ghent to the present moment, for he sent a cannon-ball bang through the centre of the principal bell at the top of the famous Bell Tower. One of the scenes of Taylor's play of 'Philip Van Artevelde' is laid in the Bell Tower of Ghent. This last-named person was one of those who, possessing great powers, occasionally raise themselves above their fellows, and suffer in consequence. Van Artevelde did more to raise Ghent to its commercial prosperity than all the rest of the merchants put together. He was made chief magistrate, and of course became odious to many on

account of his success; and his enemies at last persuaded the people that he intended to *sell* them to the King of England; and one day, when he had returned from England, his house was stormed, and he was torn to pieces. His house still exists, and there is a tablet recording his destruction. Of all the commissioners, as they are called (persons who are hired by strangers to show the sights of the town); the one at Ghent was the most intelligent. He was exceedingly angry if we didn't admire all that he showed us. His knowledge of pictures was small, and therefore he occasionally directed our attention to great rubbish, and his rage when we found fault was laughable. However, he certainly took us to one picture—'St. Bavon,' by Rubens—that we praised to his heart's content. We told our commissioner our principal object was pictures, and that he must take us where there were the best. He told us with a knowing look he would show us the finest in the world, and great was his disgust when we turned up our noses. I couldn't understand him, as he spoke Dutch to the man who had charge of them; but I never saw contempt stronger on anybody's face in all my life: he evidently thought we were affecting a taste for pictures, knowing nothing about them. Our friend had but one arm (the left one), and we were curious to know how he had lost its fellow. It appears he was unable to restrain his curiosity during the Revolution (at the time of the separation of Belgium from Holland), and he must needs go amongst the crowd who were being driven

backwards and forwards by the soldiery. Seeing many people killed about him, he thought he was not in a particularly safe position, and the sooner he got to his own home the better. After one of the charges by the military, he found himself within a few yards of his own door. It was shut, of course; he raised his right arm to ring the bell, when whiz! bang! came a ball and shattered it—'So I was obliged to ring with my left hand, sir,' concluded our irritable friend. There is a very remarkable religious establishment in Ghent called the Great Béguinage; it is quite a little town surrounded by water. You enter through a sort of half-fortified gateway, and there are streets and squares all in miniature proportion like any town. The place contains more than six hundred nuns, all living alone in separate houses; they have left their worldly names outside the gates, and are known by the names of different saints, adopted according to their fancy, and painted over every door. They have a beautiful chapel, in which they may be seen any evening by strangers; it is only by attending the chapel that you can see them assembled, otherwise your knowledge is limited to an occasional sight of a solitary nun as she walks quietly through the little streets to her own home, returning, perhaps, from some sick person's bed in the town. They have their property at their own separate disposal, and they can leave the convent if they are so inclined. This is a very singular regulation, and it is their boast that, though they have existed as a body many hundreds of

years, there has never been an instance of secession. The 'Grand Béguinage' is the only religious establishment that was not molested by Bonaparte. He considered it so well calculated to do good, and its laws framed on so excellent a plan, that he showed the good nuns the light of his countenance, and never interfered with their quiet duties. . . . . .

"I must not forget to tell you of an incident that took place the night we slept at Ghent. The day had been close, sultry, and oppressive, not a breath of air stirring, and I think it was pretty well midnight before we went to bed. We generally managed to get our bedrooms together, or as nearly so as might be; and it happened that Stone and I were placed near each other. The partition that separated the rooms was thin, and we could talk comfortably through the walls. When our candles were extinguished, we found our rooms as light as day with the moonlight. We both got up, opened our windows, and leaning out we paid the lovely night many compliments. It was certainly exquisite—our windows overlooked the inn garden—the trees and walks, and the white statues looking charming in the moonlight. Perhaps we talked rather loud; whether we did or not, somebody heard us, for I was in the middle of a lovely speech to the moon (which Stone was laughing at, by-the-bye), when the head of a woman with a night-cap on it was poked out of the window beneath me, and a vixenish voice said in unmistakable English, 'Perhaps you will be good enough to remember there are other people

in the hotel besides yourselves, and they are not fond of such noises in the middle of the night as you are making.' The vixenish face disappeared, and down went the window. Stone finished his laugh at my speech rather louder perhaps than the lady liked, and wishing her a very good-night, we went to bed."

"Brussels, 1850.

"We had received such unfavourable accounts of the pictorial treasures at Brussels, that we should have passed over that place altogether but for the fact of our having accepted letters of introduction to two of the most famous artists of Belgium, Messrs. Gallait and Geefs, whose acquaintance we were very desirous of making. See us then, immediately after our arrival at 'Belgium's capital,' hiring a carriage and a commissioner—a horrible rascal, by the way—determined to see everything as quickly as possible. First of all to Mr. Gallait, who lived in the outskirts of the town; a long and wearisome journey. Our horses seemed to have been in the employment of an undertaker, and no whipping would prevail on them to quicken their funereal pace. And the long regular streets! up one, down another, all so much alike that I could fancy we were continually going up and down the same hot street for a punishment. At last the gates of Brussels were passed, and we reached Mr. Gallait's, whom we fortunately found at home. If one might judge of the prosperity of the artists in Belgium by the style in which Gallait seems to vegetate, it would appear that the sooner

one takes up one's bed and goes to Brussels the better; but the great painter's account of the patronage he has received, and the evident comfort in which he lives, do not agree in the least; for he told us that since he had been working in Belgium for nine years he had sold but two pictures to private buyers, the State being the patron—how unlike England! Gallait's house is large and splendidly appointed, with a lovely garden and the best studio I ever saw. He is a remarkably handsome man, very dark, with a long black beard. Not a word of English could he utter, so I was obliged to be spokesman. We had not come at a good time, he said, for he had little to show us—chiefly portraits, but those very good and very English in the style of painting. When our Queen was in Belgium she gave Gallait two commissions which he executed, and the two pictures are now at Windsor. There were many small pictures and sketches in his room unsold, "malheureusement," as he said. We went from Gallait's to the Palais de Justice, where is a colossal work by him—the abdication of one of the Kings of Spain in favour of his son—which raised the painter still higher in our estimation. Our next visit was to Mr. Geefs, the sculptor, and mighty polite he was, speaking capital English. A voluble, energetic little chap; it was quite pleasant to talk to him. His chief work is an immense group, composed of several figures, to commemorate those who fell in the Revolution. It is placed in a square called 'the Place of the

Martyrs,' over the bodies of the martyrs aforesaid. To examine it, you must descend into a kind of vault, where may be read in letters of gold the names of those 'slain in the defence of liberty,' as the old soldier custodian expressed it. There were vast numbers from all parts; their places of abode inscribed after each name. Some from Italy, some from Ireland, and one or two Englishmen amongst them. We felt the policy of thus 'provoking the silent dust with honour's voice,' especially with such people as the Belgians, many of whom would almost sacrifice their lives for the sake of a corner amongst those gilded names. Imagine the powerful incentive on future occasions, when they know that if they fall their families will be provided for, and their names go down to an admiring posterity in letters of gold.

"'Now remember,' said Stone, being dreadfully out of temper with our commissioner, who wanted to take us to see lace-making and nonsense of that sort—'remember, I say, that pictures are our object, and as we have very little time, you will be good enough to take us only to places where pictures are to be seen.'

"'Very well, gentlemen; very well,' was the invariable reply; and as invariably did he propose botanical gardens, or crockery-shops, or a salamander—'a very rare beast' that was to be seen a few miles away. The conviction came upon us that he got a fee from the proprietors of these different objects of attraction, and we told him so by way of

stopping his proposals; but nothing would do—he was the most persevering wretch I ever met with. We had been told of a large collection of modern Belgian and French pictures belonging to a merchant, a Mr. Van der Something. So without more ado we ordered our commissioner to take us to —what seemed to plain English comprehension—a large establishment in the grocery business. We walked into a large shop, and were told by an old lady who was serving behind the counter—Mrs. Van der ——, I have no doubt—that if we would do her the honour to give ourselves the trouble to walk 'down there,' waving her hand gracefully towards an avenue of tea-chests, orange-boxes, etc., etc., we should arrive at 'the picture gallery.' We followed her directions, and without losing our way among the groceries, we reached the pictures and Mr. Van der —— himself, who was playing the part of showman to some ladies and gentlemen who seemed in raptures with the pictures. 'And is this,' we all exclaimed, 'a display of the choicest pictures that the Belgian school can produce? if so, we may be justly proud of our own.' But what were we to say to the picture-loving grocer, who was all agape to catch our praise, and praise we could not? We made a shabby excuse of being pressed for time, and so left him with a firm conviction on his mind that we were three English fools who neither cared for pictures nor understood them.

"'Now, gentlemen,' said the commissioner, 'there is only the Museum where there are pictures, not

good ones' (there was nothing to pay there, so our friend could receive no bribe); 'so you will perhaps have time to go and see the lace-making; it is really——'

"'Confound both you and the lace! Why the devil don't you cease to bother us!' said Stone.

"'Very well, gentlemen; very well.'

"So to the Museum we went, and found a very large and indifferent collection, scarcely a good picture in the lot; some real Rubens, but very poor ones. There is really nothing that one remembers with pleasure. This finished our picture-seeing, and we were nearly finished ourselves with the intolerable heat and dust.

"'Now, then, drive to the hotel as fast as these undertaker's horses of yours will go.'

"'Very well, gentlemen—very well; but there is a salamander to be seen in the garden of——'

"'D——n the salamander and you too!' said Egg.

"'Very well, gentlemen.'

"And to the hotel we went, and soon after found ourselves at the station, attended by our commissioner, whose services were required to look after the luggage. I think the fellow felt he had not made an agreeable impression upon us, for as we were sitting in the train on the point of starting for Antwerp, he put his ugly face in at the window, and said:

"'I beg pardon, gentlemen, but if you should come to Brussels again, I would advise you by all

means to see the salamander; you have not such a thing in——'

"We all three gave him our blessing, and in the midst of 'Very well, gentlemen—very well,' we left for Antwerp."

"Antwerp, August, 1850.

"Stone not being well, Egg and I started early on our pictorial pilgrimage. Antwerp, of all Belgian towns, is richest in the pictures of Rubens. In Antwerp he lived, and there he died; his body lies in the church of St. Jacques, under the high altar of a little chapel in one of the side aisles. One of his finest pictures decorates the altar, the subject being a Holy Family with attending saints. The handsomest of Rubens's wives represents the Virgin; the great painter himself is contented to play the inferior part of St. George, whilst his children disport themselves as cherubim of ravishing beauty. There can be no doubt that Rubens greatly honoured Antwerp, and in these later days Antwerp has returned the compliment by placing a large statue of him in the Place Vert, by calling streets and hotels after him, and by placing the chair in which he sat, wreathed with immortelles, in the Museum; where his works glow with colours that seem as fresh after two hundred years as if they had just left the artist's palette. Rubens was certainly one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever produced, and the rapidity with which his pictures were painted—if we may believe tradition—is almost as wonderful as the pictures themselves. It is said that the altar-piece at St.

Jacques was begun and finished in six weeks! I am not disposed to dispute this, for granting the work to be an almost miraculous performance, it is very likely to have been produced in a miraculously short time. To such powers as this man possessed, nothing seems impossible in the form of pictorial achievement. I had seen the two grand pictures in the cathedral some years ago, and I am happy to say I am more able to appreciate them now than I was then. Sir Joshua Reynolds tells us that when he visited Antwerp seventy years ago, he lost much time in going from church to church in quest of Rubens's pictures. We were more fortunate, for though some of the finest are in the positions in which Reynolds saw them, great numbers have been moved, and now form part of the national collection in the Museum."

The following gives my impressions of our journey to Rotterdam *en route* to the Hague:

"I will now continue my account of our wanderings. We left Antwerp with regret, and having the choice of going to Rotterdam *en route* to the Hague, either by sea or by canal, we preferred the latter. The trip, all the way from Antwerp, is the pleasantest that can be imagined; there is the usual nuisance of the examination of luggage on the frontier of Holland as a slight drawback. The steamer stopped opposite a dirty-looking fishing town, and a couple of important functionaries belonging to the Excise came on board and made themselves as unpleasant as possible. However, they found nothing con-

traband, so we were allowed to proceed on our journey. Dordrecht—or, as it is commonly called, Dort—was the birthplace and residence of Cuyp, one of the great luminaries of the Dutch school. The scenes of most of his works lay by and on the rivers and canals about Dort, and after seeing so many of this great painter's works, it was quite curious to meet at almost every turn of the river some spot that seemed familiar to us; and it was not till we remembered that we were in the locality of so many of Cuyp's pictures, that we could persuade ourselves that we had not often visited the places that we now saw for the first time."

Here end the extracts from the letters written when the impressions they record were fresh. I think I must have written much about the Hague, so rich is that place in pictorial treasures. If I did, the letter has been lost; but as I have visited the Hague since, and my notes on the pictures may be found elsewhere in these reminiscences, the lost letter is of no consequence.

CHAPTER XV.

SERVICE OF ART IN DETECTION OF CRIME.

STONE painted charming pictures, which were engraved and very popular; notably a pair, "The First Appeal" and "The Last Appeal." Love was the theme of these and of most of Stone's work. The two "Appeals" were bought by Mr. Baring, and were injured in a fire that took place at that gentleman's house. "The Last Appeal" caught fire first, and much of the paint was burnt from the canvas; "The First Appeal" being but slightly injured. On hearing of the fate that had befallen the pictures, Douglas Jerrold is reported to have said, "Dear me, 'The Last Appeal' was 'the first to peel.'"

Stone was one of the Dickens Theatrical Company, and played many good parts admirably; his handsome face and fine figure, conspicuous off the stage, were of great service to him upon it. He told me of one of Jerrold's sarcastic sayings, perfectly indifferent to its application to himself. Stone had replaced his chimney-pot hat by a travelling-cap, during one of the hot and dusty journeys of the company to Manchester. The hat was so placed as to make it the receptacle of much dust and dirt.

"Look here," he said to Jerrold, "my hat is half full of rubbish."

"It is used to that," was the reply.

I never sought Jerrold's acquaintance. I was afraid of him, for I dreaded his tongue. I was mistaken, no doubt, in estimating his character by the seeming brutality of some of the sarcasms he uttered, for those who knew him intimately all agreed in declaring Jerrold to be one of the kindest-hearted men living. Compton the actor agreed in this, but told me of an instance of Jerrold's ready wit, which, to the ordinary mind, scarcely bears out the amiable theory. Jerrold was roving about the West End in search of a house that he had been commissioned to hire for the season for a country friend. Compton met and accompanied him into a house, and in one of the rooms was a large mirror that reflected the visitor from top to toe:

"There," said Compton, pointing to his own figure, "that's what I call a picture."

"Yes," said Jerrold, "it only wants hanging."

I must now return to Ivy Cottage, where Egg lived for many years. At the corner of what is now Queen's Road, stood an inn called the Black Lion; from that hostelry, and extending down the only part of the ground then built upon, was a high hedge, which enlosed Ivy Cottage and the garden surrounding it. The house was very old and very picturesque, and had long been the residence of the eminent engraver Reynolds, known as one of the best translators of his great namesake's works. Reynolds's workroom became Egg's studio; it was

approached through the dining-room, in which so many of my happiest evenings were spent. Mulready, whose art needs no eulogy from me, became a frequent guest. It was some time, however, before he could be induced to accept Egg's oft-repeated invitations. I knew Mulready very well, and one day Egg begged me to try to discover Mulready's reason for so constantly declining his invitations.

"The truth is," said Mulready, "I don't want to meet Leech, who, I understand, constantly dines with you all."

"May I ask why, sir?" said I.

"Yes, I will tell you. You know the postage envelope that I designed, and which has been so mercilessly criticised—well, Leech caricatured it. I don't mind a bit about that; but what I think I have a right to object to is the insult offered to me by a little bottle in the corner of the caricature with a leech in it. He implies that I am a leech, a blood-sucker, in respect of the remuneration I have received for my art generally, and no doubt, also, for that confounded postal envelope in particular. Now, you know that my prices have never been extravagant," etc.

I was so amazed that anyone could be ignorant of Leech's usual manner of signing his drawings, that I could scarcely find words to reply, and still more difficult was it to refrain from annoying the old artist by laughing in his face. Suffice it to say that I made the matter clear to Mulready, and obtained from him an eager promise to accept Egg's next invitation. Leech was present at the dinner first attended by

Mulready, when he heard with amused astonishment, from Mulready himself, of his misunderstanding of the leech in the bottle. The two artists became great friends.

Mark Lemon, then editor of *Punch*, was a constant guest at Egg's dinners. He was occasionally accompanied by a friend whose society was delightful until he had taken the quantity of wine that usually makes ordinary people jovial; he then became quarrelsome, unless Dickens happened to be a guest, when the august presence generally saved Egg's wine, and ourselves from unpleasantness.

Lemon always watched the approach of inebriety; and on one occasion he said to me: "Look at B——, he is trying to peel an apple with the nut-crackers; so I shall have to carry him off very soon."

When Hans Christian Andersen was staying with Dickens, Lemon was invited to meet the celebrated Dane at dinner; and on the occasion Lemon was more than usually entertaining, so much so as to cause Andersen to say: "Ah, Mr. Lemon, I like you; you are so full of comic."

At one of Egg's dinners Mulready told us of an adventure with a highwayman in nearly the following words:

"I have lived somewhere or other in Bayswater all my life; and when I was a student at Somerset House, about the year 1805, I always walked along what is now called the Bayswater Road, down to the Strand and back again—no omnibuses in those days, and hackney-coaches were beyond my pocket.

One bright moonlight night I had proceeded about as far as where the town-end of Westbourne Terrace is now—nothing but a country lane then; not a house of any kind near—when a man came out of the shadow thrown by a large tree, and producing a pistol, addressed me in the usual robber fashion with—

"'Your watch and money, please.'

"'I am a poor artist,' said I. 'See, these are my drawings. I haven't got a watch; I have never been able to buy one.'

"'Your money then, and be quick!'

"All this time I was watching the fellow's face by the moonlight; it was very white, and I think he was more frightened than I was. I gave him all the silver I had about me; he then said 'Good-night' civilly enough, and started off towards London.

"I made the best of my way home, and before I went to bed I drew the man's face very carefully, and very like him, as the sequel will prove. The next morning I went to Bow Street with my drawing, in the hope that it might be recognised by the officers there, as being like some one known to them; but no. Several of them examined it carefully, and attentively listened to my story; but the face, they said, was new to them.

"'If you will leave the likeness here, sir,' said the chief 'runner,' 'we may perhaps come across the person it represents.'

"That event very soon happened; for, if my memory serves me, a fortnight had scarcely passed before I had a call from the Bow Street officer, who told me he believed my friend was caught; 'could I

go with him at once? he had a coach at the door.' We rumbled away to a watch-house somewhere near Southwark Bridge. We entered the room, and found a man dressed like a sailor toasting a red herring over the fire. He turned at the noise made by the opening of the door, and I recognised my thief. I walked up to him and said :

"'How do you do?'

"'Pretty well, thank you, sir. Shall be better when I have put this herring out of the way.'

"'Ah! if you had confined yourself to putting herrings out of the way it would have been better for you,' said the officer.

"'Oh, gammon! I am innocent of that,' replied the sailor.

"'What is he supposed to have done now?' said I.

"'Why, sir, only murdering the toll-keeper on Southwark Bridge and robbing the place.'

"'Do you remember me?' said I.

"'No, sir; I never saw you before.'

"'What! not on a moonlight night in the Oxford Road?'

"'Couldn't have been me, sir—never was in the Oxford Road in my life.'

"The murder was proved as easily as I could have proved my charge against the man, and he was hanged."

Mulready was fond of attending trials of great criminals. He showed me drawings of many whose crimes and names are forgotten. I think it was about 1824 when Mr. William Weare was murdered

by Thurtell. The circumstances connected with that crime are so well known as to render any recapitulation of them by me unnecessary. Mulready was in court during the trial, when he drew likenesses of Thurtell and his accomplices Hunt and Probert, and found his sketch-book serviceable for a strange purpose.

A portion of Weare's skull had been broken by Thurtell's pistol into several small pieces, which the surgeon, who was giving evidence, vainly tried to piece together, so as to fit them into that part of the skull that had escaped fracture. Seeing that the surgeon's nervousness rendered him quite incapable of obeying the Judge's order, Mulready offered his services; and on the back of his sketch-book he fitted together the pieces of bone "as you would a puzzle"—he said to me—and handed them to the jury. Thurtell was hanged, and his body consigned to the surgeons. We had casts which had been taken from different parts of him at Sass's school, to help us in our anatomical studies. All new students were introduced to Thurtell's eyelashes, which had adhered to the plaster when the cast was taken, our practice being to rub the new-comer's nose into them.

I may give one more instance of the service art has been in detecting crime. My friend O'Neil, in passing a public-house opposite Kensington Church, was robbed of his watch. He was ascertaining the time by gas-light, when a man snatched it from him after a very short struggle, sprang into a gig that was standing at the door, and drove off. The time for observation was very short, but it was long

enough to enable O'Neil to fix the man's face in his mind, and also upon paper when he got home.

The police were presented with the copy, and requested to look out for the original; who was soon after arrested and committed for trial. O'Neil's drawing was produced, and considered, together with his sworn recognition, sufficient proof of the man's guilt, in spite of a very able defence by his counsel, who ridiculed the drawing mercilessly, declaring it was as much like Julius Cæsar as the prisoner at the bar.

"The man was convicted," said O'Neil, "and the sentence was no sooner passed than there came a message from that impudent barrister asking me to let him keep the drawing, as he considered it such a capital likeness of the man."

It was possible to see into Ivy Cottage from the top of an omnibus, or any vehicle higher than the hedge that separated the house from the Queen's Road; and it was also easy to see tempting objects to thieves, for the sideboard in the dining-room, with much valuable silver upon it, was plainly visible. Whether Egg's riches were discovered in the way I have pointed out or not, was never known; but one night the house was burglariously entered, and silver of the value of more than a hundred pounds was carried off. Egg made a sketch of the scene that his dining-room presented on the morning after the robbery. He drew himself standing in his dressing-gown, ruefully contemplating some heaps of salt which the thieves had emptied on to his red velvet easy-chair out of the silver salt-cellars.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "COMING OF AGE."

I MUST now take leave of Ivy Cottage, and return to more personal matter. The success that had attended the pictures of the "Merry-making" and "The Old Woman accused of Witchcraft," encouraged me to further effort in the direction of large compositions.

Fear of modern-life subjects still possessed me. The hat and trousers pictures that I had seen attempted had all been dismal failures; and I felt sure, or thought I did, that unless a subject of tremendous human interest could be found—such an interest as should make the spectator forget the dresses of the actors in it—modern life was impossible; and as no such subject presented itself, I took refuge in bygone times; and during my seaside holiday in 1848, I made a sketch for a picture to be called "Coming of Age," the period being about that of Elizabeth. The scene is laid in the quadrangle of an old English mansion. On steps leading to the house stands the young heir, listening to an address of congratulation read by an old man, who may be

parish clerk. Groups of villagers, tenants, and others, surround the reader, several of whom bring gifts. An armourer presents a helmet decked with flowers; a falconer's boy is in charge of two dogs (deer and blood-hounds); an old woman, who may have been the young lord's nurse, with clasped hands invokes a blessing upon him; and in the background peasants and neighbours are regaling on an ox roasted whole, that affords a satisfactory *pièce de resistance.* Some noble relatives of the young heir stand behind him.

My authorities for the background were Hever Castle, and Heslington Hall, near York. This picture has been well engraved, and therefore may be so familiar to my reader as to make further description of it needless.

After the much greater difficulties of finding appropriate models, costume is one of the most troublesome details that a painter has to contend with. Many visits to the Print-room of the British Museum may be paid in vain. The authorities are difficult to find, and when found, and the masquerade-shop is rummaged, only to discover tinsel and theatrical absurdities in the shape of dresses that no human creature ever wore at any time, except on the boards of a minor theatre—the artist's trouble may be imagined. In these days there are persons learned in ancient dress, whose assistance to the painter is very valuable, and to be acquired at a reasonable price; but when the "Coming of Age" was painted, no such advantage existed, and the dresses for my picture had to be made from the best authorities I

could find. I was so fortunate as to see an ox roasted whole—a ceremony that was advertised to take place at the opening of a cattle-market at Islington.

I think neither sight nor smell were altogether pleasant, and the company was doubtful. I stood on a bench, from which I could sketch the huge roast, and at my feet stood a youth of somewhat criminal aspect. He was occupied innocently enough, when two men made their way through the crowd, one of whom seized the lad's hands, whilst the other instantly handcuffed him. I can hear now the click of the handcuffs and the lad's "Wot's this for?" and the thief-takers' reply: "You know what it's for, and you come along."

I find by my diary that the "Coming of Age" was begun on one of the last days in September, 1848, and finished in April, 1849; and if some of my young student friends could see my diaries for the last five-and-forty years, they would see a record of incessant work—no day, literally, without a line—that I do believe would surprise them. My work has never been interrupted, I am thankful to say, by illness, and I never allowed it to be interrupted by anything else.

In my early days I worked on Sundays—following the example of those about me—in spite of the remonstrances of my good mother, who used every argument she could think of to prevent my persisting in doing what she knew to be wicked; and being fully persuaded that even worldly success could

never attend such doings, she finished a homily one day by telling me that if I "persisted in working on the Sabbath, I should never be worth a farthing as long as I lived."

In reply I said: "My dear mother, I don't defend working on Sunday for a moment; but with respect to the curse of poverty following such doings, you must remember Sir Joshua Reynolds always painted on Sundays, and he died worth seventy-three thousand pounds in the three per cents."

"That has nothing whatever to do with it," replied my mother.

This has always struck me as a delightful example of the logical faculty in the female mind.

In the production of a work of art, friendly or unfriendly criticism is of great value, but few advantages are more difficult to secure. Men paint in various styles, and the ordinary habit is for one's critic to be unable to identify himself with the intention of the friend whose picture he has to criticise He cannot help you along the road you have chosen, because his own course of treatment would have been altogether different. Hence, some of the greatest artists I have known have been useless as critics; whilst other and very inferior painters, having both inclination and power to place themselves, as it were, on one's own standpoint, have been of infinite service. There are two kinds of critics: one may be too good-natured, and the other too severe—I have gained and greatly suffered by the latter. I always know when I have

been successful by the savage way in which my friend attacks me. All lay criticism is, in my opinion, almost useless. There are exceptions, no doubt; and I recall one as I write, in the person of one of the smallest men conceivable—Peter Powell. Peter was the intimate friend of Washington Irving, Stewart Newton, R.A., and C. R. Leslie, R.A. In the autobiography of the last-named, justice is done to the humorous side of Powell's character; his critical powers are not mentioned.

I made Peter's acquaintance while I was painting the "Coming of Age." He often saw the picture, and it was the better for his visits. As he sat behind me one day, he told the following story. I should premise that Powell was a clerk in the War Office, and during his usual holiday he joined a party of friends on an excursion to Switzerland, *viâ* the Rhine, leaving his mother (with whom, being unmarried, he constantly resided) at his house in London. From all I heard, the affection that commonly exists between son and mother was on Powell's side of extraordinary tenderness; and though what I am about to relate may seem to prove that a man of remarkable common-sense may be subject to superstitious terrors, the simple way in which Powell told his story, and my knowledge of his perfect truthfulness, leave no doubt in my mind that the events happened as he related them.

The party had reached Basle, having fully enjoyed the beauties of the Rhine; and after a very fatiguing day, Powell retired to bed and was immediately

sound asleep. How long he had slept he had no means of knowing, when he was awoke by what appeared to be the sound of his own name. At first he gave a dream credit for an illusion, and was composing himself for a second sleep, when, as it seemed, close to his ear, his name was repeated, and in the unmistakable voice of his mother. Further sleep was now out of the question. Powell rose from his bed, struck a match, and by its light he ascertained the precise time—*twenty-one minutes past three!* He lighted candles, dressed, and tried to read till daylight. There were no telegraphs, nor indeed railways, at the time of these events; and the uncertainty of the travellers' movements made communication by post almost impossible. Though Powell had hitherto laughed at the stories of the dead speaking to the living, to announce the time of their departure from this world, his experience of this night might prove the truth of what is so commonly believed; and so completely did this idea possess him, that further participation in a pleasure-trip was out of the question, and in spite of the earnest entreaties of his friends—armed with all the usual arguments used in such cases—he determined to return home as fast as post-horses could take him, and learn the worst.

"Never in my life," said Powell, "did I suffer so terribly. My mother had always been more than a mother to me—she was the cleverest, best of women. I thought the journey would never end; but end it did at last, and with a beating heart I went towards

my home, henceforth to be desolate. The servant started and turned pale when she opened the door; I could not speak, but rushed past her, and, scarcely knowing what I did, I flung open the sitting-room door, and found my mother reading the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' She started like the servant, but without turning pale; on the contrary, I never saw her looking better, as she took me in her arms and said:

"'Good gracious, Peter! what has brought you back so soon? and what is the matter with you? What are you crying for? Do tell me what has brought you back before your holiday is half over!'

"'*You* did!' said I, when I could recover myself; 'you called me!'

"And many a laugh the dear old lady and I had over my spoilt holiday, and my stupidity in spoiling it. But, mind you, nothing will ever convince me that I was asleep, or dreaming, or suffering from indigestion, or that I did not distinctly hear my mother's voice."

Admission to the ranks of the Royal Academy carries with it many advantages. Amongst the most valuable, and sometimes the most abused, is the right to "the line" for eight works; and though that privilege has been curtailed in the present day by a sort of arrangement that no member shall *claim* to have more than four pictures conspicuously placed, certain favoured individuals—sometimes the least deserving—are permitted to ignore the salutary regulation and parade their enfeebled powers, to the injury of the Exhibition and to their own dis-

comfiture. In my early days, the Associates were seldom allowed to exhibit in the Large Room at all, and scarcely ever given more than one place upon the line; nearly all my own smaller pictures, including "Sir Roger de Coverley and the Spectator," "The Good-natured Man"—now in the Sheepshanks Gallery—and many others, were hung near the floor, or in dark and secluded corners. The "Coming of Age" was very kindly placed in one of the much-coveted angles of the Middle Room; the Press notices, then eagerly read by me, were on the whole favourable. Thackeray, advocating the more frequent illustration of modern life, asked in a review of the Exhibition, "Why, when a man comes of age, it should be thought desirable that he should come of the age of Elizabeth?" and another critic suggested that it would have been better if such an ill-drawn idiotic youth as Mr. Frith represents had been cut off in infancy, and so been prevented from "coming of age" at all.

Between the production of such large compositions as the "Merry-making," "Witchcraft," and "Coming of Age" pictures, many small works were painted, and amongst them was one called "A Gleaner," a half-length of a girl carrying a sheaf of corn. I cannot claim the entire design of this little study, for it was arranged partly by Frederick Tayler, the then President of the Water-Colour Society, who, being ambitious to try his hand in oil-colours, had come to me for some friendly lessons in a part of the art with which he was unfamiliar. Though hampered by a strange method, he succeeded in producing a charm-

ing study, which was immediately bought by Mr. Jacob Bell; and if the great demand for his water-colour drawings would have allowed him time for different practice in oil, I have no doubt that my old friend—my very old friend, for he survives at the ripe age of eighty-seven—would have rivalled his own excellence in water-colours.

My little "Gleaner" became the property of a Mr. G—— of Birmingham, who dealt in wearing apparel as well as pictures. My price, thirty guineas, was cheerfully paid. Before the picture left me it was seen by a Mr. Birt, who was forming a collection of small pictures, and by his suggestion I repeated the subject, but changing the half-length into a representation of the entire figure, with a background of Scottish mountain scenery. Before beginning the second picture, I wrote to Mr. G—— asking his permission, as I felt bound to do, and he replied that he would consent on the condition of his having the refusal of the proposed picture. The background became of such importance in the new work that I feared to undertake it, and I proposed to Creswick that he should assist; to this he consented for "a consideration." The picture was finished; Mr. Birt saw it, and offered what appeared to me the monstrous sum of a hundred and fifty guineas for it. After many struggles between my modesty and my avarice, and after hearing from many friends that I should be a bigger fool than I looked—which I was assured was impossible—if I asked Mr. G—— a lower price than another was willing to pay, I accord-

ingly wrote to Mr. G——, and received the following reply:

"DEAR SIR,

"If I read your note correctly, and you ask the sum of 150 guineas for the picture of the 'Gleaner,' I beg to decline it.

"Yours, etc.,

"J. G——."

I was not surprised, and Mr. Birt was pleased—or he said he was—when he paid the largest price I had then received for so small a work. I can imagine Mr. G——'s disappointment if he heard years afterwards that he had neglected a good investment; for at the sale of Mr. Birt's pictures the "Gleaner" fetched seven hundred guineas. This picture, after passing through several hands, is now in the possession of Mr. Pender, in Arlington Street.

I hope in noticing strange instances of the caprices of value of my own works, I shall not lay myself open to a charge of vainglorious boasting; nor will I allow the fear of such an accusation to prevent my naming any instance that may occur to me which I think may illustrate the great demand for certain kinds of art, the production of others' as well as of my own hard-worked brush.

It was during the varnishing-days of the year in which the "Coming of Age" was exhibited that I first saw Sir William Allan, the intimate friend of Walter Scott and Wilkie. At luncheon-time a

little gray old gentleman made his appearance, and was received with cheers.

"Who is that?" said I to Maclise.

"That's Wullie Allan," was the reply.

Wilkie had been dead some years, and there was much talk of him and his early life in London, deeply interesting to me. A great deal of it has escaped my memory, but the following anecdote told by Mulready may entertain others as it did me:

After the death of Wilkie's father—a Scottish minister—his mother and sister came to London and charged themselves with the care of Wilkie's home in Norton Street, where the eminent painter was producing year by year the works on which his great reputation will mainly rest. Mulready was his fellow-student—sometimes his model, as in the "Duncan Gray"—and so intimate as to be a constant guest in Norton Street. Mrs. Wilkie's health began to fail from the time of her arrival in London, and she became at last so seriously ill that recovery seemed almost hopeless. Mulready was constant in sympathy with Wilkie's anxiety, calling most days to make inquiry. Norton Street—now, I think, called by another name—was then so quiet that study could be pursued with comfort. Street-musicians found no encouragement, and pretty generally tried their fortune elsewhere. Great was Mulready's surprise then, on entering the long street one afternoon, to hear the distant sound of bagpipes. Strange, for not a piper was to be seen; and stranger still, the sound

grew louder and louder as Mulready approached Wilkie's door, when it became evident that the performer was playing inside the house. Mulready knocked, not without the fear that his knocking might be drowned by the music, and Wilkie opened the door. Speech was impossible, and Mulready was taken into the parlour, where a Highlander was playing for dear life. When the music ceased Wilkie said: "Well, ye see the mother is not so well to-day. She said she would like to hear the music again, for she is aye fond of the pipes."

My second picture in the Exhibition of 1849 was taken from "Don Quixote," and represented the immortal Don at dinner with the Duke and Duchess. Don Quixote's hesitation to yield to the Duke's invitation to take the head of the table—a position always offered to an honoured guest—drew from Sancho a story which he thought appropriate to the occasion.

"Then thus" (quoth Sancho), "both of them being ready to sit down, the husbandman contended with the gentleman not to sit uppermost, and he with the other that he should, as meaning to command in his own house; but the husbandman, presuming to be mannerly and courteous, never would, till the gentleman, very moody, laying hands upon him, made him sit down perforce, saying, 'Sit down, you thresher! for wheresoe'er I sit, that shall be the table's end to thee.' And now you have my tale; and, truly, I believe it was brought in here pretty well to the purpose. Don Quixote's face was in a thousand

colours, that jaspered on his brow."—*Don Quixote*, Part II.; chap. xxxi.

This picture was a commission from Mr. Frederic Huth, in whose house in Palace Gardens it still remains, surrounded by companions of great excellence; notably a magnificent Constable, an exquisite Wilkie, and good pictures by many of our best painters.

It is always agreeable to be able to note instances of liberality, as well as intelligent critical supervision, during the execution of a work; and in my commission from Mr. Huth I experienced both. When I produced my sketch my employer asked me to name a price for the picture that would be satisfactory to me, and on my hesitating he named one himself, much in excess of what I should have demanded. To name a price for a picture before it is begun is always difficult, and even dangerous, to one party concerned or the other. Wilkie used to say, "No man can tell how a picture will turn out. You should never name your price till your work is done; it may prove to be worth more than you imagined—or less. It is just impossible to work up to a precise sum. Besides, ye ought to be thinking of money as little as possible." I think I succeeded in some respects very well in my "Quixote" picture; the Sancho and the Chaplain being thought successful, the Don less so, from the extreme—almost insurmountable—difficulty of giving to his figure the dignity that his appearance, the lank jaw and attenuated form, are so apt to destroy; and it is

only in such hands as Leslie's that the difficulty disappears. On the whole, my reputation was advanced by the exhibition of the two pictures.

It was about this time that I painted, in conjunction with my friend Ansdell, a picture called "The Keeper's Daughter." The subject was simple enough —a pretty girl feeding dogs in a Highland cottage— Ansdell being responsible for the animals, I for the figure and the rest of the picture. H. T. Ryall, to whom we owed the commission for "The Keeper's Daughter," was an engraver of the first rank; his finest work, perhaps, being a translation of Wilkie's "Columbus." The print from our joint performance was successful, and the picture, having served its purpose, was disposed of by its proprietor; under what circumstances I never knew. A few years after the picture had disappeared, I was taken by a friend to see a large collection belonging to a Mr. F——, a retired tanner, who had a mansion at Blackheath. I was warned that Mr. F—— had been the victim of a certain dealer, from whom nearly all his pictures had been bought at a cost of many thousand pounds, and that some of them were spurious. Mr. F—— received my friend and me with great politeness, and before he showed us his collection, he so seriously begged for our candid opinion as to give rise to the idea in my mind that, from some cause or other, doubts of the pictures' excellence or originality, or both, had taken root in his mind. Every room was filled with pictures, and the staircases were lined with them. One of the first to be noticed was of an Italian

boy, with hurdy-gurdy and white mice, in which the hand of a member of the British Artists in Suffolk Street was easily traced, and I named him.

"Oh no!" said Mr. F——; "that is by Eastlake, your President, you know." Anything less like Eastlake's work it would be impossible to imagine. "I paid a large sum for that picture, because it is a subject not often attempted by Eastlake."

The vilest daubs were shown us as genuine Wilkies, Turners, Websters, etc. Two red herrings hanging against a realistic deal-board were by Turner; a Holy Family by Webster, and so on; indeed, all the pictures were as curiously unlike, in the subjects peculiar to each artist, as they were in manner of production. After going through a series of terrible examples of bad art, Mr. F—— said:

"Now I will show you a picture by an unknown painter; I bought it in Wardour Street as a Landseer. Here it is; you shall judge for yourselves. I know it is not a Landseer, and I think you will agree with me that, great as Landseer is, he never equalled my 'Daniel in the Lions' Den.'" So saying, our collector uncovered a picture so vile as to make us wonder that ignorance could be so great as to find merit in such a thing. "There," said Mr. F——, "I think you will agree with me that Landseer never painted such a picture as that."

"I agree with you, sir," said my friend; "Landseer could not paint such a picture to save his life."

We saw many Landseers, every one spurious.

"Now," said Mr. F——, pointing to a mahogany

box, "I have here a Landseer which I only show to particular friends." He unlocked the case, and lo! my "Keeper's Daughter'! "I gave twelve hundred guineas for that, and I consider—I got it a bargain."

This was too much. Silence would have been criminal.

"Sir," said I, "you have been cheated; that picture is the joint production of myself and Mr. Ansdell."

"Oh, come now—you don't mean to say that!" in accents of alarm.

"Indeed, I must say it; and, after much consideration, I feel it to be a duty to tell you that scarcely a picture in your house is painted by the artist whose name is attached to it."

"Why, I have got a warranty with lots of them!"

"Get your money back then, if the law will give it to you," said I.

Mr. F—— was silent for some moments; he then said:

"All the Landseers, do you say?"

"Yes," said I; "all."

"Do you think Mr. Landseer would come here and confirm that?" said Mr. F——.

"I am sure he would; and if you desire it, I will speak to him immediately on the matter."

To end the story, Landseer went to Blackheath, accompanied by his brother Charles, when he endorsed our opinions, of course so far as his own supposititious doings were concerned. But, after all, there *was* a Landseer in the collection, in the shape of an old lion, the size of life which was used

as a chimney-board at Charles Landseer's house, and painted by that artist, but elevated in the Blackheath collection into a splendid position on the walls, with the advantage of a superb frame and a curtain before it. Mr. F—— had not confined his admiration for art entirely to modern specimens. A few ancient pictures, or what he thought such, had a room to themselves. Amongst the rest were three pictures—a Quentin Matsys, a Vandyke, and a Wouvermans. It cannot be denied that merit and originality in works of art are matters of opinion, more or less valuable according to the taste and knowledge of those who are for the moment in the judgment-seat; but it sometimes happens that opinion may be backed up by incontrovertible proofs. Mr. F——'s Quentin Matsys, for instance, contained several figures dressed in the costume of George II., and as the great Dutch painter lived some hundreds of years before George II., the picture could not be his work. The Vandyke represented Charles II. in about the fiftieth year of his age. Mr. F—— produced documents tracing the descent of the portrait from the time of Vandyke, with the names of the noble owners whose different collections it had adorned.

"I fear, sir," said I, "that I can prove to you that it is impossible that Vandyke can have painted that picture."

"Can you?" said Mr. F——, who had become a little irritable. "I should like to see you do it."

"You shall," said I. "Now tell me, how old does Charles look in that picture?"

"How old!" said Mr. F——; "what on earth can that have to do with it? How old! well I should say, pretty nearly fifty."

"Just so," said I. "Well, then, as Vandyke died when Charles II. was twelve years old, he could not have painted the King when he was fifty."

The Wouvermans was a bad modern copy of a well-known picture in the National Gallery. Mr. F—— assured us that all good judges considered his picture the original, and that in the National Collection a copy.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUBJECTS FROM GOLDSMITH, SMOLLETT, AND MOLIÈRE.

THE Sheepshanks Collection, now at South Kensington, was founded by one of a class of collectors extinct at this time. Mr. Sheepshanks was a sleeping partner in a cloth firm at Leeds. His London residence was at Rutland Gate, where, in a charming gallery, the greater part of his collection was displayed. Like all people possessed of art treasures, Mr. Sheepshanks was annoyed by the importunity of strangers, whose requests to see his house and his pictures were always refused, and not always in the language of Lord Chesterfield. Being a bachelor, and though in early life a very hospitable one, the expense of his household could not have been great, nor could the prices of his pictures, for he told me that he never possessed an income of more than fifteen hundred a year, and out of that, to use his own words, "I have always paid my way, and paid for my pictures too." Mr. Sheepshanks may, I think, be considered to have been somewhat irascible. The sight of a card—even if it bore the name of a friend—offered by strangers as a ticket of admission, was

treated with contempt. I happened to be in the gallery with him one day, when his servant presented the Duchess of ——'s card, accompanied by that of one of the most eminent R.A.'s.

"And there's a lot of ladies," said the girl.

"Is Mr. ——," naming the R.A., "with them?"

"No, sir."

"Then tell them to go to the—— no, I don't mean that. Say what you like. Pictures not shown. Say anything, only don't let them in." He then turned to me and said, "Now, would you believe it? I've told that man a thousand times that I should be delighted to see his friends, but he must come with them. How do I know where people may pick up other people's cards? He is as careless a fellow as ever lived. He may drop his address-cards as likely as lose other things, as he constantly does."

When in the humour Mr. Sheepshanks would name the prices that his pictures had cost him. I am afraid to trust to my memory for many instances; but I can well recollect the astonishment with which I heard of the incredibly small sums for which he had acquired some of the most wonderful of Landseer's works. One of the largest—"The Departure of the Highland Drovers"—was a commission from the Duke of Bedford for £500. When the picture was finished, the Duke said he was very poor, and if Landseer could find another purchaser he (the noble patron) would be glad to resign "so beautiful a work." Another neglect of a good investment; for undoubtedly, if "The Departure of the Highland

Drovers" were sold now, it would bring quite as many thousands as the hundreds for which the Duke might have purchased it. Mr. Sheepshanks always chuckled when he told how, having heard of the Duke's wish, he took immediate steps to gratify him. The exquisite "Jack in Office," "The Shepherd's Chief Mourner," "The Tethered Ram," etc., were all bought for ludicrously small prices; and any exclamation from a bystander to that effect was sure to elicit from Mr. Sheepshanks a somewhat petulant explanation: "Well, I always give what is asked for a picture, or I don't buy it at all—never beat a man down in my life. Never sold a picture, and I never will; and if what I hear of the prices that you gentlemen are getting now is true, I can't pay them, so my picture-buying days are over."

And over they were in 1850, when I had the honour of receiving Mr. Sheepshanks' last commission, and the pleasure of executing it in the form of the "Scene from Goldsmith's 'Good-natured Man,'" now at the South Kensington Museum. As this picture can be seen by anybody, I may be spared the somewhat unpleasant task of talking about my own work. The picture represents Mr. Honeywood introducing the two bailiffs to Miss Richland (his *fiancée*) as his friends, and vainly endeavouring to make them conduct themselves as gentlemen. The following is the dialogue, in Goldsmith's words:

"HONEYWOOD. Two of my very good friends, Mr. Twitch and Mr. Flanigan. Pray, gentlemen, sit without ceremony."

"MISS RICHLAND. Who can these odd-looking men be? I fear it is as I was informed. It must be so (*aside*)."

The year 1850 found me embarked on another large composition—"Hogarth before the Governor of Calais." I forget in what book I found the anecdote of Hogarth's adventure at Calais, where he was arrested as a spy in the act of sketching the "Gate at Calais" for the background of his famous picture of that name; but the truth of the arrest is well established, for he has represented himself as sketching the gate with the hand of a French soldier touching his shoulder. He was taken before the Governor, who informed him that "if peace had not been signed between France and England a few days previously, he would have been hanged on the ramparts."

My diary for 1850 presents the usual record of foggy days and disappointing models; in short, difficulties without number more or less successfully battled with. As I could not have Hogarth to sit for me, I had to keep a bright look-out for some one resembling him. After much searching and delay I found a suitable model, not unlike the great moralist in body, but in mind as opposite as the poles. For the French soldiers I was fortunate, for I discovered two individuals whose political views were so much at variance with the established Government at that time in power in France, as to necessitate a precipitate flight from that country to this; and whose faces matched their principles and suited me exactly. I

must acknowledge that they predicted pretty accurately the career of Napoleon III., than whom (according to them) no such villain ever existed. "A Republic—no! Monarchy—thousand thunders, no! A general division of property and begin again—that, monsieur, is the panacea, the only substantial equality and fraternity." I painted the Governor's clerk from an old man, who assured me that his grandfather was at the execution of Charles I. He made the matter clear to me at the time, but I have since found a difficulty in working out the problem—the old model was nearly ninety in 1850. He belonged to a very long-lived family, whose representatives must have been remarkable in many ways, for they were always born when their fathers were at least eighty years old. Granting the truth of this, it is just possible that a boy of ten (my model's grandad) might have sat on his father's shoulders, so that he could look over the heads of the soldiers who surrounded Charles's scaffold and have seen that sovereign's obstinate head severed from his body. I leave my readers to work out this little sum.

I have said elsewhere that Associates' pictures were seldom if ever allowed to enter the Holy of Holies of the Academicians—the "Large Room" in Trafalgar Square. Before "Hogarth" and "Louis XVI. in the Temple"—Ward's *chef-d'œuvre*—were hung in that envied locality, I can only remember one example to the contrary—Redgrave's "Poor Governess." If the veteran R.A.'s could have heard the ribald comments of some of the Associates on what

we called their dog-in-the-manger monopoly, how we declared the "Big Room" to be fast becoming a hospital for incurables, some of us would have been longer in becoming Academicians than we were. I can well remember my difficulty in keeping my temper when I was told by one of the oldest and most incompetent of the R.A.'s that a pretty storm had been raised by my picture being "most improperly" placed in the Large Room. "Hogarth" was a commission from a Lancashire worthy, who repudiated his order, and the picture was transferred to a firm of publishers, by whom an engraving from it was produced, without much success either as a print or a publication.

Smollett's "Roderick Random" suggested one of the best of my smaller productions: it was called "A Stage-coach Adventure," and represented the interior of a lumbering vehicle that required three days to go from York to London, and was named "The York and London fast coach, the Highflyer." The passengers represented were a Quaker and his family, a British officer, and a lady with her daughter. One great difficulty of the subject arose from the necessity for removing one side of the coach, in order to show the occupants, thus causing the coach to resemble too much, perhaps, the interior of a small room. Through the coach-window appeared the masked face of an ugly highwayman, who, with pistol thrust forward, made his usual demand. The Quakeress screams and throws herself back in the coach; the Quaker hides his pocket-book under the cushions; the

mother of the young lady—the *vis-à-vis* of the Quakeress—offers her purse to the robber; and the young lady falls fainting on to the shoulder of the captain, who is paralyzed with fright. The motto from "Macbeth" which I quoted in the catalogue, "What! a soldier, and afeard!" seemed very appropriate.

Amongst my friendly critics on many occasions was George Cruikshank, and it was on discussing the "Stage-coach Adventure" that he told me of one of his own. When a little boy he was placed at a school at Edgeware, and on one occasion, after spending his Christmas holidays at home, he was returning in a post-chaise in charge of his father, when they were stopped by a highwayman. Amongst other Christmas gifts which the boy was taking to school was a long tin trumpet. Cruikshank's father, alarmed by the galloping of a horse, had looked from the window of the chaise, and pretty well assured himself of the character of the rider; he then turned to the boy and said: "Now, George, the moment we are stopped you poke that trumpet broad end out of the window. The boy did as he was bid. The highwayman mistook the trumpet for a blunderbuss, turned, and rode back as rapidly as he had come. I have the illustrious artist's word for what will appear to most people incredible, namely, that this incident took place in what is now called the Edgeware Road. I cannot resist relating another adventure of Cruikshank's, for the truth of which I think I can safely vouch. For

many years before his death Cruikshank was not only "a total abstainer" himself, but a persistent advocate of that principle by pen and pencil on all occasions—in season and out of season. His wonderful series of designs called "The Bottle," and his picture in the National Gallery called the "Worship of Bacchus," are sufficient proofs of his advocacy by the pencil. His many pamphlets speak for his pen; whilst his Exeter Hall speeches and chair-taking have again and again proved the sincerity of his convictions. It was very late one night after attending a temperance meeting, that on letting himself into his house in the Hampstead Road, Cruikshank saw the figure of a man carrying a bundle disappear through a door leading into his garden. All the household were asleep. There could be no doubt of the character of the man with the bundle, who was clambering over the wall into the neighbouring garden, when Cruikshank caught him by the leg. The artist was a powerful man, which the burglar soon discovered, as he resigned himself into the hands of his captor. Fortunately a policeman happened to be passing the house; the thief was given into his charge, and the three walked off towards the station. I have said that Cruikshank not merely never *lost* an opportunity of enforcing his principles, but he constantly *made* one; and on the walk to the police station he lectured the burglar somewhat as follows: "Now, my friend, this is a sad position to find yourself in. It's the drink, my friend—the drink. Ah! I can smell it. Now look

at me," pausing for a moment under a gas-light. "You see before you a man who for the last twenty years has taken nothing to drink stronger than water."

The burglar looked up at the artist and growled: "I wish to God I had known that; I would have knocked your d——d old head off!"

"The fool thought I had weakened myself by leaving off alcoholic drinks. The reverse—the very reverse is the fact; for let me tell you," etc., etc., etc. And so dear old George would lecture as long—or longer—than he could get a listener.

Cruikshank laboured under a strange delusion regarding the works of Dickens and Ainsworth. I heard him announce to a large company assembled at dinner at Glasgow that he was the writer of "Oliver Twist." Dickens, he said, just gave parts of it a little "literary touching up;" but he, Cruikshank, supplied all the incidents as well as the illustrations. "Mind, sir," he said to me, "I had nothing to do with the ugly name Dickens would insist on giving the boy. I wanted him called Frank Stedfast." He also wrote the "Tower of London," erroneously credited to Ainsworth, as well as other works commonly understood to have been written by that author. My intimacy with Cruikshank enables me to declare that I do not believe he would be guilty of the least deviation from truth, and to this day I can see no way of accounting for what was a most absurd delusion. Dickens was very fond of Cruikshank, but he found him occasionally trouble-

some ; he would see, or fancy he saw, a resemblance to an old lady friend of his in one of the characters in "Chuzzlewit" or "Nickleby," or some other of the serials then in course of publication, when he would say to Dickens, "I say, look here : Mrs. So-and-so has been to me about "—Mrs. Nickleby, perhaps— "and she says you are taking her off. I wish you would just alter it a little ; the poor old girl is quite distressed, you know," etc., etc. This Dickens told me, and added : "Just imagine what my life would be if George was making the drawings for 'Dombey' instead of Brown, who does what I wish and never sees resemblances that don't exist !"

I now return with reluctance to my own doings. I am indebted to lithography for three of the most faithful transcripts that have been made from pictures of mine. They are the work of an old student friend, Maguire, whose life as a lithographer was cut short by photography, a *science*, I suppose I must call it, which bids fair, in the modern shape of photogravure, to destroy line, and all other styles of engraving, as effectually as it has put a stop to lithography. When Charles Landseer, who made better puns than pictures, said of photography on its first appearance that it was a *foe-to-graphic* art, he little thought how completely his prophecy would be realized. I have suffered so dreadfully from translations of my pictures by photogravure, that I hold the method in absolute abhorrence, though I admit that I have seen satisfactory reproductions of other works by this process.

My second subject from Molière, also taken from the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" (which, with the banquet-scene from that play and "Sir Roger de Coverley and the Spectator," were those referred to as so beautifully lithographed by Maguire), represented the reception of the belle Marquise and the Marquis Dorante by the Bourgeois, previous to the banquet so inopportunely interrupted by Madame Jourdain. He is shown as going through his three bows; and finding himself after the second a little too near the lady, he is saying, with back still bent: "Un peu plus loin pour la troisième, madame." A lacquey is at the door of the dining-room, through which preparations for the banquet may be seen. I received a hundred and sixty pounds for this picture, but at what price it was acquired by Mr. Newsham, of Preston, I have no means of knowing. At the death of that gentleman the picture passed, with the whole of his fine collection, into the possession of the Corporation of Preston, as a free gift to the people of that town. At the South Kensington Museum there are small copies of the Molière pictures in the Jones Collection.

A beautiful girl, to whom I did but scant justice in my picture from Molière, was one of three sisters who were all favourite models at that time. The career of the prototype of the belle Marquise was not a little singular. She disappeared from artistic circles with the disregard—common to her sisterhood—for the necessities of those who had relied

on being able to finish their work from the model who had sat for its commencement. Inquiry was fruitless. She had left her lodgings, and no trace behind her. I found myself in the stalls of the Haymarket Theatre at one of the last appearances of Macready, and in taking the usual indolent survey of the dress-circle through an opera-glass, I was stopped in the front row by the sight of a face that I knew so well, and an eye that when it caught mine indulged itself in something very like a wink. Sure enough it was the belle Marquise; but instead of the homely cotton in which she was formerly dressed, the latest and most extravagant fashion had been called into play. Diamonds glittered on neck, arms, and head—she was transformed indeed. After a sidelong glance at a distinguished-looking middle-aged man at her side, the Marquise bestowed a little nod and smile upon me, and then resumed the aristocratic bearing that became her admirably. I dare say I shall surprise my readers when I tell them that the noble-looking middle-aged man was indeed a nobleman who had married our model. I discovered the name of the bold aristocrat afterwards, and had the pleasure of reading the name of Lady —— amongst those of the happy people who were presented at Court.

In speaking of Macready, I am reminded that it was about this time that great actor quitted the stage. In the early part of these pages I have said that no such acting as Macready's King John and Charles Kemble's Faulconbridge can be seen on the

present stage; and whilst maintaining that opinion as regards a special play, and the remarkable combination of genius in the representation of it, I must not allow myself to forget that we have a tragedian who, as an "all-round man," is a far greater actor than Macready. In a few characters such as Virginius, William Tell, Rob Roy, and some others, Macready was, I think, unapproachable; but to compare his Hamlet or Shylock with Irving's rendering of these characters would be disastrous for Macready. That Macready had multitudes of admirers and "troops of friends" was manifested by the attendance of about six hundred men who gathered round him on the occasion of a banquet—inaugurated chiefly by Dickens—given to him on his retirement from the stage. The company was composed of representatives, more or less eminent, of science, literature, and art, to say nothing of numbers of Macready-worshippers from various ranks of life. In a letter to my mother, under date March, 1851, I record my impressions in the following extract:

"I assisted, as the French say, at the Macready banquet last night. A great many of my friends were going, so I joined them. We had capital places close to Bulwer Lytton—who was in the chair—provided for us by Dickens, who had the management of the affair. He made an admirable speech; Thackeray also spoke well and very humorously. Macready, who speaks other people's words much better than his own, made rather a halting business of his oration. In returning thanks he said his

heart was fuller than the glass which he held—that might easily have been the case, for the glass which he held was empty! I was close to Charles Kemble, who spoke right well. I never saw such a sensation as when he rose to reply to the drinking of his health. I feel sure that most of the people there thought that the Kemble line had passed away years ago; and when the old man rose, feeble and bent, but with the old stately bearing, and in the sounding and dignified, though somewhat shrill, voice peculiar to the Kembles, responded most happily to the toast, the *row* was deafening. Every man rose—glasses, napkins, even *decanters* were shaken and waved about; the company seemed to have taken leave of their senses.

My dinner cost me a guinea and a headache, besides a fight, or nearly one, for my hat and coat. Just fancy six hundred people all struggling at the same time at a small table to get their hats and go away. The waiters were all drunk, and that happy condition was no assistance to them in their efforts to distribute the hats to their owners; indeed, to judge from the maudlin way they tumbled and reeled about, one might fancy that they had been shipwrecked on a sea of hats and coats, and were in despair of ever reaching dry land. Every gentleman had been furnished with a ticket or number for his hat, and if you can imagine three or four hundred people screaming out different numbers, and the tipsy waiters smiling at them, and in the most soothing tones requesting them to have

patience, you will understand what I had to go through. As to Stone, the last I saw of him was the upper part of his body; he was clinging to a pillar with one arm, and holding out his ticket with the other, kicking at the same time with both legs at the people behind him. Stone's treatment of his fellow-guests was not agreeable to them; there was a terrific row, a few policemen made a dash into the crowd—Stone disappeared; I saw no more—and thus endeth the Macready banquet."

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HANGING COMMITTEE.

I NOW approach the time when the desire to represent everyday life took an irresistible hold upon me. My first venture in modern-life subjects took the shape of a small picture of a mother and child. The child was kneeling, saying its prayers in its mother's lap, with the wandering attention so common to children. The gray and black dress of the mother and the white night-gown of the child made a sufficiently agreeable arrangement of negative colours. The heads were characteristic, though—as was afterwards said in excuse for the failure as a publication—too like portraits. The picture was beautifully engraved by Stocks ; but the finest engraving will not avert failure if the subject represented does not satisfy the many-headed, whose likings and dislikings are equally incomprehensible. A little study, done from a good-looking girl who was in my service as housemaid, had a great success as an engraving. I painted the girl not only in her habit as she lived, but in her habits also, for she was carrying a tray with a bottle of wine on it. The whole thing was

simple enough. The picture was bought by Jacob Bell, who—convinced that there was what he called "copyright" in it—succeeded in extracting forty guineas from a well-known publisher, who, differing in opinion from Bell as to the value of the copyright, immediately transferred it, at a great loss, to another and more adventurous printseller. Bell presented me with the copyright money, and I heard with pleasure that the picture was placed in the hands of Frank Holl, afterwards A.R.A., an admirable engraver and most worthy man. Holl produced an excellent print from the little picture. I approved, and it was published—after being, without my knowledge—christened "Sherry, sir?" What a thorn in my side did that terrible title become! I dined out frequently, and dreaded the approach of the servant with the sherry, for the inevitable "Sherry, sir?" rang in my ears, and reminded my neighbour at table of my crime. "A pretty thing enough that servant girl of yours; but how you could give her such a vulgar title, I can't think." This was dinned into my ears so frequently that I determined I would try to get the obnoxious words changed into some less objectionable. I went to the publisher, and unburdened my mind. "Change the title!" said he; "why, it's the name that sells it. We offered it before it was christened, and nobody would look at it; now it sells like ripe cherries, and it's the title that does it."

Before devoting myself to more elaborate compositions from modern life, I determined to try to realize a scene that had always struck me as ad-

mirably adapted to pictorial representation, namely, the quarrel of Pope and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, or rather the cause of the quarrel, for it is said that, in a moment of passion, Pope declared his love for the beautiful Lady Mary, who received the vows of the poet with astonishment that resolved itself into irrepressible laughter.

By anyone acquainted with the character of Pope —and who is not?—the fearful blow that such treatment would be to a man so sensitive, may be imagined; and the ample revenge he allowed himself to take in after years, be somewhat excused. Admirers of Pope objected to the subject as placing the poet in a humiliating position. Leslie, I remember, spoke to me strongly on that point; but the picture was done, and hanging on the Academy walls, when the objectors opened fire; so repentance, which I confess I felt, came too late. The truth was, I could not resist the dramatic effect of the two figures—the consuming rage of Pope, contrasted by the cruel laughter of the lady. My admiration and respect for Pope should perhaps have prevented me from exposing so great a man to ridicule and humiliation. *Mea culpa! mea culpa!*

Of all the authorities, and they were many, that I consulted for the likeness of Pope, the bust by Roubillac is the only one that conveys the man: there he is with features worn by suffering, but showing the intellectual strength that must have distinguished such a man. The portrait by Jervas in the National Collection, though interesting as

giving a more or less correct rendering of the "shape and make" of the man, conveys no idea to my mind of his intellectual power. Reynolds said that no man could put more into a picture than there is in himself; if that be so, there was not much in Jervas, most of whose portraits are examples of what I once heard a painter say of a likeness of a strong-minded man: "The fellow," meaning his brother artist, "has made a likeness of So-and-so certainly, but he has managed to knock out his brains." There are many so-called likenesses of Lady Mary, but they differ from each other nearly as much as do those of her namesake the Queen of Scots. In Mr. Gibbons's collection there is a beautiful picture by Sir Joshua that is called Lady Mary; but I doubt if the dates will serve, for Sir Joshua could scarcely have painted the beloved of Pope in the prime of her loveliness. In Mr. Gibbons's picture the original could not have exceeded her thirtieth year, when Sir Joshua was a young and unknown man.

In my picture I fear I cannot claim much resemblance to the beautiful original, though my lady is handsome enough to be the cause of love in Pope or anybody else. An incident occurred in connection with this picture that is worth recording, as showing the way artists are sometimes treated by their—so-called—patrons. A collector, of a somewhat vulgar type, had long desired me to paint a picture for him. I showed him the sketch, and to prove the culture of the gentleman, I may mention the following facts:

"What's the subject?" said he.

"Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Pope," said I; "the point taken is when Pope makes love to the lady, who was married at the time, and she laughed at him."

"The Pope make love to a married woman—horrible!"

"No, no, not *the* Pope—Pope the poet!"

"Well, it don't matter who it was; he shouldn't make love to a married woman, and she done quite right in laughing at him; and if I had been her husband, I should——" etc.

"Very well," said I, "as you don't like the subject we will say no more about it. I will paint you something else."

"Oh no," was the reply; "I like to see a woman laugh at a man who makes an ass of himself. I'll take it. What's the figure?"

"Before I name a price," said I, "I must tell you that there is a condition attached to the picture which must be agreed to by whoever takes it; and that is, that I may make a small copy of it for a friend. So if you object to copies, as many people do, now is the time to say so."

The exact size of the intended copy was fixed, the condition and price, three hundred and fifty guineas, agreed to; and in due time the picture was finished and highly approved by my learned friend, who, I discovered afterwards, had never read a line of Pope, or indeed even heard of him.

When the Exhibition was closed, I wished to

begin the copy at once; but my "patron" begged to have the picture for a few days, as he "wished to show it to some 'country friends.'" I let it go, and when I applied for it according to agreement, the owner quietly defied me, and refused to carry out an arrangement to which he acknowledged he had consented. He then proceeded, without consulting me, to make terms with an engraver for the production of the picture in mezzotint—a process quite unsuited to it—pocketing a hundred guineas for the copyright. There are people so amiable as to submit to insult, and even injury, without complaining. I am not of that species, and my complaints were loud enough to reach the ears of my employer, who, to my surprise, made his appearance one morning at my house. I froze him by my reception, and declined to shake hands, to his great surprise.

"I hear you are annoyed because I can't allow you to copy my picture," he began.

"Did you, or did you not, consent to a copy being made when you bought the picture?" said I.

"Well, certainly I did; but all my friends say that a copy, ever so small, would take away from the value of the original."

This was too much, so I tried to close the interview by asking, in my loftiest manner and in stereotyped phrase, "To what am I indebted for the honour" (honour with sarcasm) "of this visit?"

"Well, look here" (I fear, he said "look 'ere"), "I can't have a copy done; but I'll tell you what—I will

give you a hundred pounds, and you can divide it with the gent you have to do the copy for, as a compensation like for the copy."

My reply was conveyed without speaking; for I went to the door, opened it wide, pointed out to the "gentleman" the way he should go, and he went out without another word. He died long ago. His pictures were sold at Christie's, where "Pope and Lady Mary" fetched twelve hundred guineas. No wonder, when such instances as the above—seldom so gross—can be multiplied by artists to any extent, that they should prefer dealing with dealers who understand art and artists, and can be legally bound to carry out (in rare cases, when moral binding is not sufficient) their engagements to the letter. A dealer, it should be remembered, has a variety of tastes to satisfy. What does not please one "client" may please another; but the "patron" may have a peculiar taste, or no taste at all, may be as full of whims and fancies as he is of ignorance, and then the life of the painter is not a happy one. For many years I have always sold my pictures to what is called "the trade," and have invariably escaped the tribulation that so often attends the patrons' patronage.

I will pass over many trifling pictures, which the profane would call "pot-boilers;" but though some few may be open to that charge, I may speak of two that received as much careful study at my hands as anything that ever passed through them. Both were taken from Scott, one from the "Bride of Lammermoor," the other from "Kenilworth." They were painted

for a man who was another disappointing specimen of the patron—a grumbling ignoramus who could not see the faults that really existed, but discovered plenty of his own making. He grumbled during the progress of the pictures, and grumbled when they were finished; and when he sold them—as he did very shortly—for a great deal more than he had paid for them, he grumbled because he had not got enough. These pictures are now in the possession of a man who appreciates them beyond their merits. Before they reached their present owner, Mr. Price—whose gallery in Queen Anne Street is filled with pictures, and frequently on Monday evenings with artists, who find the heartiest welcome and the best cigars, etc., always awaiting them—the pictures in question had passed through many hands, some clean and some very dirty, as I shall proceed to show. The scene from the "Bride of Lammermoor" is that in which Lady Ashton cuts the love-token from Lucy's neck and gives it back to Ravenswood. It happened that the day after spending a very pleasant Monday evening in Queen Anne Street, I noticed, in Christie and Manson's usual Tuesday's advertisement, that a picture by me from the "Bride of Lammermoor" was to be sold. As I had then painted but one picture from that novel—and that one I had seen hanging in Queen Anne Street the night before—I was puzzled by the advertisement, and determined to see what the meaning of it was. What was my surprise to see on Christie's walls a facsimile of Mr. Price's picture, or else the

picture itself. Doubt as to which it was, was put a stop to by Mr. Price himself, who looked at the picture with a puzzled air, and then looked at me without any change in his expression.

"Well," said I, "what on earth does this mean? I never made a copy of the picture—not even a sketch of it."

"Somebody has made a copy of it," said Mr. Price; "must have been done on its way to me by one of those rascally dealers, and sold as the original. Whose property is it?"

I found from Christie's the readiness always shown to remove from their walls whatever may have got there under false pretences; and the name of the owner of the spurious picture was disclosed. I need only allude to this gentleman to say that he was quite innocent of fraud; he was assured the picture was painted by me, and so perfect was the copy, even to the name forged upon it, that I should not have doubted its authenticity for a moment, if I had not had such convincing proof to the contrary. I requested to be allowed to destroy the copy, so as to prevent its "betraying more men;" but the owner objected, as the forgery was required to enable the victim to make the man from whom it was bought refund the purchase-money.

Since the attempted sale at Christie's, I have found it necessary to repudiate the copy twice. I suppose no man's works have been more frequently pirated than those of the eminent French painter,

Meissonier. I am told that there is a cupboard in that artist's studio for the reception of such things; and when any fraudulent specimen is brought to that great painter for authentication, it is, in defiance of all opposition, consigned to the cupboard, and the key turned upon it. Whether French law would sanction such proceedings I know not; but I sincerely wish it were as legal in this country to destroy forged pictures as it is to burn forged bills.

Another instance occurs to me. Some two or three years ago, I received a letter from a person whose name I forget, telling me that he had a picture—naming the size—of the "Coming of Age." From the dimensions I knew it must be a copy, and as I had made one small copy, as nearly as I could remember, about the size named, I thought it likely the one inquired about might be my work. In the letter the writer said he had no doubt of the originality of the picture; and added that the "colouring was as fine as Titian;" but a stupid friend having expressed a doubt, he would be obliged, etc., etc. In my reply I said that if he chose to be at the trouble and expense of sending the picture to London, I would solve his friend's doubts; but that if the "colouring was equal to Titian," he might save himself the trouble of submitting it to me, as it most certainly could not be my work. The picture arrived, and I found it to be a vile daub smeared over an engraving from the original, in which the painter had followed his fancy in inventing a scheme

of colour quite unlike the picture, and still more unlike Titian.

Five-and-twenty years ago the elections at the Royal Academy took place twice a year. Vacancies in the Associate list were filled up in November, Academicians were elected in February; and it was further enacted that the death of an R.A. must have taken place three clear months before the 10th of February, or in default the vacancy could not be filled till February in the following year. Turner lingered for two or three weeks into the prescribed three months. I had to wait, therefore, nearly fifteen months for my promotion; thus serving—as Jacob did for Rachel—seven years for my hardly-earned honour. I am glad to say that the Academy "has changed all that," as well as other fossilized rules as much requiring abolishment. A newly-elected R.A. finds himself also elected into offices for the duties of which he may, or may not, be competent. He becomes a teacher in the Life and Painting Schools; he is at once placed upon the Council, and finds himself a member of the dreaded Hanging Committee. It is well known that some of our best painters are the worst teachers. Landseer used to say, "There is nothing to teach." I heard one of the most eminent Academicians say—in answer to reproaches for his neglect in not attending at the Painting School—"What would be the good? I don't know anything; and if I did, I couldn't communicate it." Maclise said to me, when as a student I was copying a picture by Reynolds, "I can't

teach you anything. I am here to take a lesson myself."

It certainly appears to me that the system of what is called teaching by visitors is altogether wrong; as, from the varied and often contradictory character of the advice tendered, the student finds himself in a condition of helpless bewilderment.

In the days of which I am writing, the Hanging Committee was composed of three men, whose duties consisted in cramming into the small rooms in Trafalgar Square as many pictures as they would hold, totally, indeed necessarily, regardless whether any of them could be seen without telescopes or not. The amiable feeling that exists between Scotchmen, whether they are strangers to each other or not, is pretty universally acknowledged; but should there be a sceptic on the subject, a glance at the Academy walls when a Scotchman happens to be one of the hangers, will dispel his doubts, unless, as happened in one memorable instance, the brotherly feeling is indulged to such a degree as to be an injury to those who were not so fortunate as to have been born north of the Tweed. David Roberts, a thoroughly kind-hearted Scotchman, being newly elected, was placed on the Hanging Committee—his brother hangmen being Mulready and Abraham Cooper. The arrangement of the pictures had proceeded harmoniously enough, the Englishmen only finding it necessary now and then to moderate the enthusiasm of their fellow-hangman in favour of some work that had

little to recommend it beyond the fact that it was done by Mac Somebody, when luncheon-time arrived. Roberts was not hungry, could not eat luncheon. Mulready and Cooper must have been exceptionally so, for they were an unusually long time away from the rooms. In the interval, Roberts, with the assistance of the carpenters, had emulated the busy bee, the result being a goodly array of Scottish pictures in all the best places.

"Good gracious, Roberts!" said Cooper. "Why, you have turned this room into Scotland Yard."

Mulready beckoned to the carpenters, and said:

"Take all these pictures down again."

Roberts remonstrated.

Said Mulready: "Friendship is noble; but when it is indulged to the injury of others, all the nobility goes to the winds. Take them every one down."

"Then," said Roberts, "if I am to be treated in this way, and my judgment disputed, I may as well go home."

"Much better," was the reply, and home Roberts went.

The two men were members of the Academy for more than thirty years after this little dispute, and I grieve to say they never spoke to each other again. Exceptions prove the rule, for I hereby declare that quarrels amongst us are almost unknown. Differences of opinion exist, as in all communities; but serious quarrels, never. Stay—there is one more remarkable exception. About five-and-forty years ago, there lived an Academician whose son was also

an artist, but of moderate ability. He was a constant exhibitor, and, in the estimation of his father, well worthy of the rank of Associate. Fortunately that opinion was only shared by a few intimate friends of the R.A., who at election-time never mustered in sufficient strength to enable them to perpetrate a wrong. Amongst the intimates of the veteran Academician was one who, I believe, never permitted any feeling but the conviction of desert to influence his vote. On the eve of an election, sumptuous dinners were given in —— Place, at which the candid friend always assisted. After a final defeat—for the young man died soon after—the man I call the candid one paid a visit to the old R.A. He was received with great coldness, and almost immediately the momentous question was put:

"Did you vote for my son, sir, last Tuesday night?"

"That," said the candid friend, "is a question no one has the right to ask."

"There is the door, sir, and I beg you will never darken it again."

Many years afterwards the veteran Academician, though scarcely able to walk, was determined to see the new gallery at Burlington House on the occasion of our first occupation in 1869. I was talking to the candid friend as the old man was supported to a seat in the large gallery during the private view.

"Why, there is old ——!" said I. "If you ever intend to be friends with him again—judging from his appearance—you haven't much time to lose."

"Poor old boy!" said Mr. Candid; "I have a great mind to go and speak to him."

"Do," said I; "he will be pleased."

I watched the interview—it was very short. When his old friend spoke to the ancient R.A., he started and looked up, muttered something, then his head sank on his breast after the manner of the aged.

"Well," said I, when the candid one rejoined me, "what did he say?"

"He looked me straight in the face, and after hearing a pretty speech I made him, he said, 'I don't know you, sir.' By Jove! what a good hater he is! It's nearly twenty years since he showed me the door, because I had done my duty."

It may interest my readers to know of the great care taken by the Council of the Academy to prevent any communication respecting the Exhibition arrangements to the outside world—notably to would-be exhibitors. New members of Council are informed that they must never "breathe a syllable" to a living being about the places of any of the pictures, until the whole of the Exhibition is arranged.

"May I not tell a friend that his picture is on the line?" said I, in subdued tones, to one of the Council, after Sir Charles Eastlake had solemnly admonished the new Councillors, of whom I was one.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us—no! and don't you see why? Your friend's picture may be on the line one minute, and off it the next. I have known instances of pictures changing places

twenty times. No work of an outsider is safe in its place till the varnishing-days; wait till then to tell your friend his fate."

After cautioning the R.A.'s, the servants, carpenters, etc., engaged to place the pictures on the walls, and the sculpture in its "den"—as the Trafalgar Square Sculpture Gallery was called—were sent for; when they stood before us, in what seemed to me great number, the President informed them that the breaking of the silence enjoined upon members and servants alike, by the faintest whisper, would cause the delinquent's instant dismissal.

I am referring to my first experience.

As picture after picture was brought before us by the long line of carpenters, the novelty of the occupation interested and amused me—for the first few hours. Then came a bewildering and weary time; being only human, we were tired—at least I was. But I can truly say I never allowed a picture to pass me without giving it the attention it merited and sometimes much more. As I have said elsewhere, I have served many times on the Council, and on the arranging Committee; and I have never known of a charge of dishonesty, in any shape, being substantiated against the "carpenters," who necessarily become acquainted with all the works offered for exhibition, and very likely, in some instances, with their producers. I have often thought that the temptation to the servants to accept bribes from outsiders must be very great. I can imagine—and should scarcely condemn—an "out-

sider" who might seek out one of the carpenters, and say to him, "Look here, you know my little picture; whenever you see the hangers searching for a picture to fill a place—a good place, you know—keep mine before them; and here is so much for you." Ah, my dear young outsider, we know that little game so well! I discovered it during my first hanging-days. To make the manœuvre clear to my reader, I must ask him to imagine long rows of pictures stacked together in each room, some with their faces exposed, some—most, indeed—showing only their innocent backs. One of the Committee was looking for a picture to fill a vacant place, when his attention was attracted to a carpenter who offered a picture with the words, "I think this is about the size, sir." My friend looked at it for an instant, passed his measuring rod over it, and walked away. I thought little of this incident. The hanging proceeded, and the walls of the large room being nearly covered, we thought it well to begin upon room No. 2. Our work had not progressed much; the line-side of one portion of the room being filled up to a small place in one corner, when, as if by magic, the carpenter's *protégé* appeared just beneath it, mutely offering itself for acceptance. "Hallo!" said the hangman, "where has this come from? it was in the other room just now. Stop, let me look at it; it's pretty good, isn't it? Not quite up to the place, perhaps. Measure it, Frith. Too big, is it? Here, take this picture away." Failure number two.

Suspicion began to dawn upon me, being, I

suppose, of a more suspicious turn than the others, who suspected nothing; not even when the persevering little picture followed us from room to room, and was at last hung to get "rid of it," on the same principle as that which influenced the well-known lady when she married her six times rejected lover to get rid of him. I have always prided myself, foolishly perhaps, on my power of detecting the emotions of the mind in the human face—even when a mask is placed upon it. If the carpenter had a mask, he did not use it, for I watched him when his charge was at last favourably disposed of; and if I had any doubt about the nature of the interest he took in it, his satisfied expression dispelled it.

Feeling that my evil imagination might have run away with me, and that after all the affair might be one of pure accident, I said nothing; but in after years, when precisely similar "accidents" took place under my eyes again and again, I could no longer persuade myself that outside influence was not occasionally brought to bear upon our excellent staff of "carpenters."

CHAPTER XIX.

HANGING REMINISCENCES.

WHILST on the subject of my hanging reminiscences, I may further note the loving feeling existing between all of Scottish race. A Mr. Mac——, a Scotch artist of considerable merit, and a fruitless seeker after Academic honours, was, it is needless to say, a friend of Wilkie's ; of whom it is reported that on one of the hanging-days he, of course being one of the Committee, was seen wandering about the rooms carrying a small picture, and vainly endeavouring to fit it into a good place.

"Why, Wilkie," said a brother hangman, "what makes you take so much trouble about that picture of Green's? it's not a partic——"

"Green!" exclaimed Wilkie ; "I thought it was Mac——'s," and incontinently left the picture to its fate.

The interest Wilkie took in Mac—— extended to his using all his influence by word and vote at election-time, and as it sometimes happens when the merits of prominent candidates are supposed to be pretty equal, names are mentioned and merits can-

vassed, in those moments of hesitation Wilkie would always exclaim, "Well, there's Mac——." This recommendation, so frequently repeated, was stopped at last by Mulready's loud exclamation, "D——n Mac——!" Beyond such small, and nearly always unsuccessful, attempts at nepotism, proceedings in respect of the selection and arrangement of the yearly Exhibition are carried out with absolute impartiality. Instead of the haste and carelessness with which the Council for selection is so often ignorantly charged, the most scrupulous care is taken in the examination of each picture, as it is carried by an assistant past every member of the Council. Whether if the works of all the R.A.'s and A.R.A.'s were submitted to the judgment of the Council—as outsiders are—they would all be admitted, is not open to question, for I am a witness to the contrary. When Constable was a member of the selecting Council, a small landscape was brought to judgment; it was not received with favour. The first judge said, "That's a poor thing;" the next muttered, "It's very green;" in short, the picture had to stand the fire of animadversion from everybody but Constable, the last remark being, "It's devilish bad—cross it." Constable rose, took a couple of steps in front, turned round, and faced the Council.

"That picture," said he, "was painted by me. I had a notion that some of you didn't like my work, and this is a pretty convincing proof. I am very much obliged to you," making a low bow.

"Dear, dear!" said the President to the head-carpenter, "how came that picture amongst the outsiders? Bring it back; it must be admitted, of course."

"No! it must not!" said Constable; "out it goes!" and, in spite of apology and entreaty, out it went.

This story was told me by Cooper, who witnessed the scene. One more example, in which I played a part. The hanging was over, the whole Exhibition arranged, and the members admitted to varnish or touch up their pictures. I was in the Large Room in Trafalgar Square, when I saw an Academician evidently searching for a picture, and unable to find it. Thinking, as frequently happens, that he was looking for the work of some outside friend, I said:

"Whose picture are you in search of? as I have helped to arrange the Exhibition, perhaps I can assist you."

"I am looking for my own," said he.

"What was your subject?"

"'Lear and Cordelia.'"

My heart sank. I had a clear recollection of a washy-looking Cordelia, and a Lear with all the characteristics of a street beggar, that had met its fate at the hands of the Council with deserved rapidity, for it "went out like a shot," not a soul having the least idea who its author might have been. The unlucky picture was found amongst the rejected, and the carpenters were warned that another such

instance of carelessness would lead to the discharge of the whole of them. I must add that the picture went the way of the unfortunate, and never appeared upon the Academy walls. Very few, indeed, are the examples of painters' powers remaining unshaken by time. If, as Shakespeare says, "time cannot wither (certain things), nor custom stale their infinite variety," the observation will not apply to my profession; and one of the knottiest problems left for Academic solution at the present time is that of reconciling prescriptive rights with the interests of art, and the interests of the painters themselves. Everybody knows the story of Gil Blas and the Bishop of Granada. Nature kindly, or unkindly, hides from a man the knowledge of his failing powers. How often do I hear old painters say, on showing a mere "shadow of a shade" of former power: "There, I mean to say I never painted a better picture in my life than that!"

I have no doubt I shall soon be using similar language, and when I do, I hope I shall find a friend to act the part of Gil Blas for me, when I promise not to imitate the Bishop of Granada. Few members of the Academy have served as often on the Hanging Committee as the writer of these lines; and it has happened to me on one or two occasions, on agreement with my brother hangers, to have to represent to the Council the necessity of asking a member to withdraw from Exhibition a work which we thought unworthy of his fame. In each case the request was *gratefully*

agreed to, and the work withdrawn. But on one occasion we had to deal with two specimens of incapacity from the hands of a very old member, whose portraits, ages before, had been justly considered ornaments of the Exhibitions. One of these delectable productions was a portrait of a clergyman, the other a picture called "Charity." The divine was not so desperately bad as to necessitate his expulsion, if one peculiarity could in any way be dealt with. He was supposed to be preaching with appropriate earnestness; and his eagerness to convert had affected his eyes in a remarkable manner: they were exactly like those of an owl; the eye-balls were intensely black, with a circle of light bright blue encompassing them round about. We tried him on the wall, but distance lent increased terror to his expression; he glared at us so fearfully, that in regard to the consequences that might arise to unwary visitors, we hastily took him down again.

"Now," said I to a brother hangman, "what is to be done? It is no use asking the old man to withdraw either of these pictures—he won't."

"No," replied my friend; "but I think we might take some of the enthusiasm out of those eyes."

No sooner said than done. A finger was wetted, a little blacking taken from my friend's shoe; the bright blue circle received a glaze of blacking, and the glare of terror-inspiring fury was changed into a softened appealing expression, as likely, perhaps, to prevail with an obstinate sinner as the more denunciatory form of admonition. With that little change

the picture took its place among the rest. The second performance, "Charity," had then to be considered. A figure which, after long examination, we agreed to be intended for a monk, was represented standing—no, falling—against a rickety door—the door of a monastery, if a black object with square patches for windows could be accepted for such a building. The monk's head was enormous; the artist, with the originality of genius, had defied nature to the extent of placing the features in the monstrous face out of their usual positions; one eye had strayed into the forehead; there was no mouth that we could discover—considered useless, perhaps, as the monk may have belonged to a monastic order in which abstinence from food was enjoined; the right hand, holding what was more like a huge muffin than anything else, was attached to an arm longer than that of Rob Roy, who was supposed to be able to garter below the knee without stooping. And the crowd of beggars surrounding the charitable monk! No words of mine could do justice to deformity which Nature in her wildest freaks had never equalled. The three hangmen, with their long measuring-rods, looking like the three witches in "Macbeth," stood staring at the painful example of the incapacity of age, till one broke silence and said: "Blacking is of no use here. What shall we do? Old —— told So-and-so that 'Charity' is the best thing he ever did. He won't withdraw it if the forty of us went down on our knees and prayed to him."

After a pause I said: "If you two will stand by

me—as oldest member I shall surely be pitched into —we won't say a word, but just leave 'Charity' out in the cold."

This was agreed to; the picture was returned to him who made it, and we never heard a word of complaint. I think I have said enough to prove that a change in the laws of the Academy is required to enable a properly constructed tribunal to deal with such cases as I have described; cases which are by no means confined to the productions of the aged members of the body, but—either from carelessness or incompetence, or both—are as often found existing amongst the younger men; who occasionally display pictures which, had they been subjected to the judgment of the Council, would assuredly have been condemned.

CHAPTER XX.

"RAMSGATE SANDS."

My summer holiday of 1851 was spent at Ramsgate. Weary of costume-painting, I had determined to try my hand on modern life, with all its drawbacks of unpicturesque dress. The variety of character on Ramsgate Sands attracted me—all sorts and conditions of men and women were there. Pretty groups of ladies were to be found, reading, idling, working, and unconsciously forming themselves into very paintable compositions. Under date Sept. 4, my diary says, amongst other entries: "On the sands sketching." "Sept. 10, sketching on sands till one." Each day, up to the 14th, I find occupied in making slight drawings of details, and on the 14th the diary says: "Made pencil-drawing of Ramsgate Sands. I wonder if I shall make anything of it—who knows?" The interpretation of this being that the different groups taken from nature were arranged to form the composition as it appeared afterwards in the completed work. The pencil-drawing was but preliminary to a very careful oil-sketch, in which colour, light and shade, and to some extent character, were

determined. So novel was the attempt to deal with modern life, that I felt it to be very necessary to be able to show to those whose advice I valued, the clearest possible indication of my new venture. When the oil-study was finished I called in the critics; but before I speak of their divergence of opinion I may give some extracts from my diary describing the progress of the oil-sketch:

"*Sept.* 30.—Began idly to make a sketch from Ramsgate Sands, which, if successful, will considerably alter my practice."

"*Oct.* 2.—An idle sort of day, thinking, and arranging for 'Ramsgate Sands.'"

"*Oct.* 3.—Finished outline of 'Sands,' an extensive business; out early to Great Exhibition.

"*Oct.* 21.—Began to paint in sketch of 'Ramsgate Sands;' did one group."

"*Oct.* 22.—Again at work; did another group."

"*Oct.* 24.—Again at sketch of 'Ramsgate Sands;' progressing with it."

"*Oct.* 25.—Finished group of girls reading, and a man selling toys."

"*Oct.* 28, 29.—'Ramsgate Sands;' worked, but did little good."

"*Nov.* 1.—Worked all day on 'Ramsgate Sands;' fear I am spending more time on it than it is worth."

"*Nov.* 3.—Sketched the widow and her friends."

"*Nov.* 4.—The green lover and over principal group."

"*Nov.* 8.—Sea-shore and figures."

"*Nov.* 11.—All day on background of 'Sands;' fear it will not do. Disagreeable at present."

"*Nov.* 13.—Again on background of 'Sands;' finished it; like it much better."

"*Nov.* 14.—Finished sketch."

"*Nov.* 15.—Ward saw sketch and seemed struck with it."

The importance, real or fancied, of a serious undertaking must be my excuse for inflicting these extracts upon the reader; they may show to the student the necessity for careful preparation before a large composition of figures is attempted. Ward and Egg were the first artists to whom I submitted my sketch. Ward approved, and I find by my diary "that Egg saw 'Ramsgate Sands,' and strongly advised me to paint a large picture from it." Mr. Birt—who may be remembered as the purchaser of the "Gleaner"—bought the sketch subject to its being more finished. The subsequent history of this transaction may serve as another example of the whims of the "patron." Under date of March 13, 1852, I find by my diary that "Webster, R.A., called, and seemed greatly pleased with picture of 'Pope and Lady Mary'" (then on the eve of finish), "and especially with the sketch of 'Ramsgate Sands.' He said he wished I was going to paint the subject for him." On Good Friday, the 9th April, the picture of the "Sands" was begun, and on Friday, the 7th May, the first touch of paint was put upon it. As the picture was eventually very successful, the superstition in respect of Friday may be disposed of in this instance. Most

critics approved of the subject, but there were several non-contents. One man, an artist, said it was "like Greenwich fair without the fun;" another, that it was "a piece of vulgar Cockney business unworthy of being represented even in an illustrated paper." My non-artist friends were one and all against it; one said, "The interest, which he could not discover, could only be local;" and an Academician, on hearing of it, said to a friend of mine, "Doing the people disporting on the sands at Ramsgate, is he? Well, thank goodness, I didn't vote for him! I never could see much in his pictures; but I didn't think he would descend to such a Cockney business as that you describe. This comes of electing these young fellows too hastily."

With certain interruptions by portraits and small pictures, the "Sands" went steadily on. The summer of 1852 found me again at Ramsgate, mainly for the purpose of painting the background, which I wished to make locally accurate. Photography was in its infancy at that time; I had therefore to rely on my own drawings of houses, cliffs, and bathing-machines; for though photography, or, as it was then called, *Talbotyping*, was tried, the result was useless. The sea troubled me greatly, as the following extract shows:

"*Sept.* 6.—At work at the sea, and perfectly at sea I found myself; for I could no more paint it than I could fly to the moon."

Then came doubts thus expressed:

"*Sept.* 11.—Clock tower, obelisk, and hotel. Will all this repay me in any way? I doubt it!"

"*Sept.* 27.—Leech called and said picture would be 'a great hit.' Who can tell?"

By the end of the month I was back in London, and at work pretty constantly on the picture on which I felt so much to depend. It was towards the close of the year that I became convinced that much more time was required for finishing properly than that at my disposal before the Exhibition of 1853. I may close the year with another extract from my diary:

"*Dec.* 31.—Skirt of pink girl; worked slowly. To a dance at Charles Dickens's. Talfourd proposed Dickens's health; a merry party. Left them dancing at two o'clock; and so ends the year '52."

Though all hope of completing my picture satisfactorily was abandoned; I find I worked as steadily at it as dark weather, the model difficulty, and other hindrances would permit, until my election as an Academician in February, 1853. Newly-elected members are expected, indeed compelled, to present a specimen of their work gratuitously to the Institution; and any such work must be submitted to the Council and approved by them, before the new member can receive his diploma. The result of the regulation may be seen in the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House; where, though there are admirable examples of some of the elect, there are others which, being *unsaleable*, have been *given* to the Academy. I cannot say that my diploma picture was unsaleable, because I found purchasers ready to take it; but I should be

sorry to stake anybody's reputation upon it, if it were much better than it is. The origin of the subject may amuse. Being in the habit of keeping my eyes pretty well open as I walked along the streets, they were one day gratified by the sight of an orange-girl of a rare type of rustic beauty. Her smile as she offered her oranges was very bewitching, and had no doubt assisted her in creating a taste for oranges on many occasions. I became a large purchaser, and succeeded, after much trouble, in getting her to promise to sit for me, provided I would go to her confessor (she was Irish and a Catholic), and get his consent. A young Catholic friend was staying with me at the time, and he readily consented to intercede with the priest. That gentleman, suspicious of my friend, gave him a very cool reception, and a flat refusal to sanction his application. For some time the girl was obdurate, but at last, as she could not get the priest's permission, she consented to sit without it. I determined to paint a laughing face from her—under the most favourable conditions a most difficult thing to do, but in her case hopeless, unless I could have induced her to go on for two hours selling imaginary oranges to phantom purchasers. I could not find anything to talk about that would amuse her, and she could not talk to me. In one of my attempts at conversation, I asked her if she was not sometimes annoyed by the soldiers and street-loafers that frequented Albany Street, where she usually stood to sell her fruit. Her experience of life was summed up in a few words.

"Yes, sometimes she was bothered; but it was by swells. Gentlemen," she said, "is much greater blackguards than what blackguards is."

After many attempts to rouse an expression that would help me to make a laughing face, I found the worst of hindrances that can afflict a painter come upon me—my model fell fast asleep; and as nothing that I could say or do would keep her awake, I abandoned the laughing subject and painted "The Sleepy Model," who now sleeps all day long in the Diploma Gallery. By showing a laughing face sketched on the canvas before which a perplexed artist stands, and the model, who ought to assist him in realizing the expression, fast asleep, I thought I should prove in a small way one of the difficulties that beset all artists—to say nothing of the situation which has its comic side. The picture was not exhibited in the annual show, it was reserved for a more cruel destiny in the Diploma Gallery—that of being always exhibited amongst many better, and a few worse, than "The Sleepy Model."

The greater part of the year 1853 was devoted to the "Sands" picture, delays taking place at intervals from the difficulty of finding suitable models. I noticed an incident of pretty frequent occurrence, which I determined to introduce into the background of my picture. A couple of men were joint proprietors of a "happy family," consisting of cats and mice, dogs and rabbits, and other creatures whose natural instincts had been extinguished so far as to allow of an appearance of armed neutrality, if not of

friendship, to exist amongst them. When the cat had played with the mice, and had allowed canaries to peck it without resenting the liberty, a hare was made to play upon a tambourine, and during the finale, the proprietor's friend and assistant on the drum made the usual collection. The drummer wore a wonderful green coat; he was very ugly, but an excellent type of his class. As I made up my mind to introduce the whole of the show, taking the moment of the hare's performance as the chief point; it was necessary to enter into negotiations with the proprietors. I found, as I expected, that they hailed from London; and I also found that they would sit, and the animals should sit, if they were sufficiently well paid for doing so. The chief proprietor's name was Gwillim, and his town residence was 32, Duke Street, Tower Street, Waterloo Road. He came to see me in London, and a day was fixed for the beginning of *my* performance. It was late in December, when our enemies the fogs were upon us, that I was promised my first sitting from Mr. Gwillim. Instead of that gentleman came the following letter:

"December 23, 1853.

"SIR,

"I ham sorry I Cannot as attend on you to-Day. My limbs is so Bad that I thout I Could not Do you juctice, and It Being so Wet and Fogger I thout it Wol Make no Diference to you

"I Remain you

"MR. GWILLIM.

"At 32, Duke St., Tower St.,
Warterlew Road."

However, the fogs lifted, and in due time I completed a tolerable resemblance of Mr. Gwillim and his establishment, including the ugly drummer; whose coat became my property, and did duty on many occasions afterwards. Under date of Dec. 30, says my diary:

"Gwillim came at last. Set to work about 12; worked hard and painted him and the hare, having the birds arranged for to-morrow."

"*Dec.* 31.—A good day at birds, cages, etc.; finished them pretty well. Paid the man 30s., and bade him adieu."

Though I was fortunate enough to be overwhelmed with commissions for small pictures, nearly all my larger pictures were speculations as regarded purchasers; but up to the "Ramsgate Sands" time, I had had little difficulty in disposing of works that, from their size, and the time occupied in completing them, were necessarily expensive. It was my habit to leave a large loophole for the escape of a purchaser, in the event of any objection arising in his mind in respect of the way his commission may have been executed. I found a few repudiations on grounds to which I could not object. About the time of the beginning of the "Sands," some collectors found me out, to whom, according to their own showing, price was of no consequence. One, I believe a very rich one from the north, to whom I showed the Ramsgate sketch, asked the price, the size of the intended work, etc. The price I could not name till after the completion of the picture; the

size was satisfactory. The collector said he was "perfectly delighted" with the subject as treated by me, and he left me after extracting a promise that I would give him the first refusal of the picture. The gentleman in question, a perfect stranger to me, happened to be a friend of an acquaintance of mine, an artist, to whom I confided the fact of Mr. S—— being in all probability the happy possessor of my picture, then on the verge of completion.

"I think you are making a mistake," was the reply. "Mr. S—— was here the other day. He told me he had seen your sketch of 'Ramsgate Sands,' and (you won't mind my telling you, will you?) he said he wondered how anybody in his senses could waste his time in painting such a tissue of vulgarity, and that he wouldn't have such a thing on his walls."

This was what would be called in prize-ring language "a facer," and quite sufficient to convince me that my promise to give Mr. S—— the "first refusal" was unnecessary. The picture was refused by five other "patrons," upon one excuse or another. One gentleman, finding himself *cornered* (P.R. again), said the picture wanted *something*. Frank Stone, who stood by and heard this brilliant objection, turned to the collector and said: "What do you say to a balloon, sir?" pointing to the sky. "Would *something* of that kind finish the picture?"

After half a dozen rejections, I refused to listen to the advice of my friends to "avoid picture-dealers,"

and the picture was bought at the price of a thousand guineas by Messrs. Lloyd; who had no cause to repent of their bargain, as I shall afterwards prove. Whilst the larger picture was progressing slowly towards completion, I painted several small works, the ready sale of which enabled me to keep the ship—now laden with several small passengers—well before the wind. Amongst the best was a scene from "Woodstock," which—with three other subjects from Scott—was very beautifully engraved by Stocks for a new edition of the Waverley Novels. In the progress of the "Sands," I benefited greatly by the advice of some of my brother artists. About six weeks before "sending-in day," I begged for a criticism from Mulready, the greatest of them all; and never shall I forget the visit. My diary says:

"*Feb.* 20.—Mulready came early, and looked over the picture. He complained chiefly of the colour and effect—too many gray tones used—more positive tints should have been chosen for some of the foreground figures; the light and shade not sufficiently massed, too much cut up into small pieces of sharp dark and light—all my old faults. Worked a little in bad spirits."

Bad spirits, indeed. The severity of the remarks was awful; so severe that the old man, conscious of his strong language, looking towards a curtain that covered the studio door, said, "I hope no one can hear what I am saying."

When he left me, I remember saying to myself, "If all that is true, I have made a dismal failure."

Unable to work, I went to Egg and implored him to tell me if there was hope in my work or not. He returned with me, and cheered me a good deal. He said, "You must remember that Mulready had come from his own brilliantly-coloured picture—his eye accustomed to strong colours—to yours, in which bright reds and greens could not be used."

That might account for much that Mulready said; but to this day I cannot understand the sweeping condemnation that he passed upon every quality in the picture. He could see no character, no beauty in the women, no nature or truth anywhere. I knew him to be a severe, but not an ill-natured critic; and the idea of jealousy was too absurd to be entertained for a moment. And that he was absolutely wrong the after success of the picture abundantly proved. Show-Sunday came, and numbers of people with it. Under date April 3rd, I find:

"Many visitors. On the whole feel the picture is thought successful; cannot tell—it may be the reverse."

This was my first year as Councillor and Hangman. As a very young member, I was not allowed to interfere with the two older men, who had gone through the arranging of the Exhibition several times before. If I proposed a picture for a good position, they were two to one against me; still in some few instances I was permitted to have an opinion, and to act upon it. Of course I took care that "Ramsgate Sands" had a good place; and when I hung it, I remember well the relief I felt, that though not a

word was said about the merit of the picture, its situation was not objected to. The Secretary said: "You have given yourself a first-rate place; now take care what pictures you hang all round your own, or you will kill it to a certainty."

The next entry in my diary says:

"*April* 22.—Finished my first hanging. It is a painful and most disagreeable business—so many interests to consider. Tried to do my duty, though perhaps with too much thought for my friends."

Regard for the interest of my friends reminds me of a young student whom I was very desirous to serve. He had sent his first work to the Academy—a scene from Sheridan Knowles's play of "The Hunchback"—a small picture containing two figures. Cooper and Webster were my fellow-hangers, and, on my calling their attention to my friend's work, Cooper used language about it which I cannot repeat. Webster smiled, and asked me if I should like the "place of honour" for it. From the remarks and manner of those gentlemen I gave up the idea of a good place; but as my young friend had told me that so long as his picture was hung he did not mind if it were hung upside down at the top of the room, I still had hope that I could smuggle it in somewhere in an inferior situation; so when Webster said, "Go to the Architecture Room, and try your hand there," I went off with a load of pictures, and "The Hunchback" amongst them. Under my orders one side of the room was pretty well furnished; my friend's picture in a high corner where I trusted it might escape the eyes

of my companions. When Cooper made his appearance with "Well, how are you getting on?" "Oh, pretty well," replied I. I saw the old hangman take a rapid glance at the result of my labours, and as rapidly disappear, to return almost immediately with Webster. Neither of them spoke. Cooper pointed with his measuring-rod at "The Hunchback" in the corner, and then turned to me and said: "It won't do; if it is to be hung anywhere, try it outside in the square. Put it on the line on the Nelson Column; more people will see it there than they will here." With every desire to serve my friend, the fates—Cooper and Webster—were against me, and "The Hunchback" retired for ever; so did the author of his being, for he left an ungrateful profession, and now supplies costumes for painting, with a greater profit to himself and everybody else than he could have achieved by the practice of the fine arts. I felt much disappointed that none of the Council had a word of praise for my picture. The thing was a novelty. I saw them look, but not a word of any kind fell from them by which I could judge of their opinions. But when the rest of the members were admitted, a change seemed to take place; several of the most eminent were loud in expressions of approval; some of the tongues of the Councillors were loosened, and I felt assurance of success to be "doubly sure."

Another quotation from my diary, for which I must apologize and promise to quote it as seldom as possible in future:

"*April* 28.—Drove to R.A. at a quarter to twelve; the Royal family came. Eastlake presented me to the Queen. She was delighted with 'Seaside.' Wanted to buy it—found she couldn't, and gave me a commission for a similar subject. Everybody likes it. I find myself and Maclise the guns this year."

Maclise's contribution was the "Marriage of Strongbow," one of his finest works, now in the National Gallery at Dublin. I retired from the presence of Royalty as soon as I could do so with propriety; but not before I had experienced the truth of what I had often heard, namely, that the Prince Consort and the Queen knew quite as much about art as most painters; and that their treatment of artists displayed a gracious kindness delightful to experience.

Sir C. Eastlake, whose duty it was to attend the Royal party through the entire Exhibition, left them, and came to me whilst I was standing among the rest of the Council, to inquire into whose possession the "Life at the Seaside"—as it was called in the catalogue—had fallen. "Bought by a picture-dealer," said I, "who for a profit would sell it to her Majesty or anybody else." Eastlake returned to the Royalties and conveyed my intelligence evidently, for I could see a slight shrug of the Royal shoulders, which said quite plainly, "Picture-dealer! Outrageous profit, of course." A few days solved the question, for Messrs. Lloyd, hearing of the Queen's desire for the picture, opened up communi-

cation through the usual channel; the result being the acquisition of the picture by the Queen for the price Lloyds had paid for it; their profit accruing from the loan of it for three years for the purpose of engraving. That part of the business was most admirably effected by Mr. Sharp, the well-known line-engraver; and if report spoke truth and the Art Union of London paid £3,000 for the plate, Messrs. Lloyd must have received a satisfactory profit on this, as on many other occasions. I should be sorry, indeed, if anything I say of these gentlemen could be interpreted into an insinuation against them, or their fair and legitimate profits. I had very many dealings with the firm, and invariably found them liberal and just. On one occasion only they allowed strict "business principles" to prevail so far as to damage their own interests. I have already remarked that I should have something to say on the "patron" subject, in the matter of the oil-study for "Life at the Seaside" and Mr. Birt; who I must say, by-the-way, had behaved to me with much kindness and liberality up to the time of my finishing the sketch for him, when his conduct became perfectly unaccountable. I completed the sketch so successfully that one of the Lloyds, happening to call, saw it, and expressed a great desire to possess it. I told him—judging from previous transactions with Mr. Birt—that there was no chance for him, as I considered the sketch already the property of that gentleman.

"Well," said Lloyd, "there is no certainty with these gentlemen. What is the price?"

"A hundred and fifty guineas," said I.

"Consider it ours if Mr. Birt declines it. Does he know the price?"

"No."

I was putting a few last touches to the little picture when Mr. Birt called to see it, and sitting behind me, something like the following conversation took place:

"What a beautiful little thing you have made of that, Frith!"

"Glad you like it," said I. "Have I done as much to it as you expected or desired?"

"Well, don't ye see" (a favourite phrase repeated constantly when there was nothing to see), "I've been thinking—er—er—that it is too small, don't y'see. It wouldn't hang with the rest of my pictures satisfactorily—from its size, don't y'see."

I don't know which feeling possessed me most strongly, surprise or anger.

"Too small!" said I. "What on earth do you mean by too small? The thing is not made smaller by the finish put upon it at your suggestion; it is the same size as it was when you bought it."

"There, there; don't get out of temper."

"But I am out of temper. I should not have spent a lot of time on the thing if you hadn't suggested it being more elaborated; and now that it is done, and you say well done, you pretend it is too

small. If you wanted an excuse for not taking the sketch, you should have found a better one."

"There you go—why get in a passion? Your pictures are 'bank-notes' (*sic*); plenty of purchasers for such as them—um—er—don't y'see?"

"Oh, as for that," said I, "I know I need not trouble myself; for as you decline it, the picture is sold already."

"Sold!" very excitedly. "Who has bought it?"

"Lloyds," was the reply.

"At what price?"

"Never mind."

"Oh, come now, I can make it all right. What is the price?"

"A hundred and fifty guineas."

"Then I will take it," and as he spoke I heard the rustling of notes, or perhaps the paper of a cheque.

"Indeed you won't," said I. "I promised it to Lloyds if you refused it, and Lloyds' it is."

"Nonsense! here is the money, don't y'see!"

"No, I don't see. I only wish I could see that you have acted fairly;" and my patron and I parted on unpleasant terms, soon after forgotten, and on both sides forgiven.

To complete the history of this little sketch, I must return to Messrs. Lloyd, then the proprietors of it. My friend Mr. Miller, owner of "The Witch," and other works of mine, saw the "Sands" sketch, took

a great fancy to it, and asked me if I thought Lloyd would forego it in his favour. Mr. Miller was then forming a large collection of the works of dead and living painters, and whilst largely employing picture-dealers to sell to him, or to purchase for him the works of departed genius, he greatly preferred buying living men's pictures from the artists who had produced them. I went to Lloyd and told him of Miller's wish in regard to the sketch, and begged him to let me sell it to Mr. M. for the price settled upon between Lloyd and me.

"Oh dear no," was the reply. "The price is two hundred guineas. *Business is business.* Nobody knows that better than Mr. Miller. If he wants the sketch, he knows where to get it."

"Is business always business?" inquired I. "Are there not occasions when it is worth while to sink the business question? Don't you know that if you were to oblige Mr. Miller in this little matter, he might buy pictures from you, or get you to buy for him at Christie's—that you might make a friend of him, in fact?"

"No," said Lloyd, "that is just what I don't know. As I said before, business is business; and two hundred guineas is the price of 'Ramsgate Sands' the Little."

I conveyed this decision to my friend, who paid the two hundred guineas, telling me at the same time that he thought Lloyd had perhaps lost more than fifty pounds by his business habits; and events

proved the truth of my idea of business; for Mr. Miller never bought another picture from Lloyd, or through his instrumentality.

From one cause or another, I found I wasted a great deal of time after the exhibition of "Ramsgate Sands." I was abominably idle, or occupied on trumpery subjects unworthy of the trouble taken in reproducing them. I confess with humiliation that I was prevailed upon to paint a companion to the vulgar "Sherry, Sir?" to be called "Did you ring, Sir?" A modest-looking servant is opening a door and looking at the spectator with an inquiring expression. I don't think the engraving ever sold, and I am quite sure it didn't deserve to sell. What became of the picture, and some others I did at that time, will, I trust, be for ever mercifully hidden from me.

Towards the end of 1854, I found myself preparing a sketch of a child's birthday. The scene is laid in a dining-room, where a family is assembled to do honour to a small person who may have attained the mature age of six, and is at the moment an object of attention to the whole party; for the ceremony of health-drinking is taking place. The heroine sits in a high chair, which has been decorated for the occasion with a wreath of flowers, and is somewhat bewildered by her uproarious brothers and sisters, whose wishes for many happy returns of the day are screamed by half a dozen shrill voices. The parent pair preside, of course, assisted by friends;

whilst the grandfather and grandmother look sympathetically on.

I am indebted to the workhouse for some very good elderly models. I am sorry to say that the freedom with which artists were allowed to select sitters from the "asylum of poverty" no longer exists. We are shut out from all the workhouses; and the reason given us is the impossibility of the "inmates," whether male or female, being able to pass the public-house on their homeward route, without leaving there much of their sitting-money in exchange for drink. The grandfather in "The Birthday" was a man who had seen better days, and found refuge in the workhouse for his old age. He was an amusing old fellow, brimming over with wise saws and good advice. He warned me against extravagance—not that he had been guilty of it, oh no! for, said he, "If I hadn't been a very careful man, I should have been in the workhouse long before I was."

The masters of the workhouses that I have visited had always been willing to assist in allowing me to select models from the great variety of characteristic faces abounding in their establishments, till the old ladies and gentlemen proved beyond all doubt, by their frequent habit of returning both drunk and abusive, that the indulgence must be stopped.

Whilst the picture of "The Birthday" was proceeding, I occupied myself with many less important works. Amongst the best were a study called

"Lovers," and "The Opera Box." In reference to the latter, I find in my inevitable diary:

"*May* 3.—The Queen came to the Academy. Prince Albert asked to be introduced to me, and complimented me on 'The Opera Box.'"

I also painted a public-house sign, or, to speak more correctly, I assisted in doing so; for Egg worked on one side of it, whilst I attended to the other. The public-house was called "The Pilgrim." On Egg's side of the sign the pilgrim, with cockle-shell and staff, was represented knocking at a door; on the reverse—my side—he was coming out refreshed, and looking up thankfully at a piece of sky, meant to pass for heaven. This work of art was a present to our friend Miller, who had just then purchased an estate in Lancashire, for which he was said to have paid a fabulous sum—as, in addition to many hundreds or thousands of acres, a whole village and the public-house were part of the bargain. We fully expected our pilgrim would have been allowed to take the place always allotted to signs at inns—either above the entrance-door, or in the prouder position on the top of a post, where he might swing and creak after the manner of his kind. But whether from respect for his calling, or for "the artistic merit with which he was invested," he was taken inside and relegated to the bar, where he is more likely to retain his "carnations" than if they were exposed to wind and weather. Many artists have painted signs. Millais once painted a "George

and Dragon;" David Cox, "The Oak" at Bettws-y-Coed; and George Harlow (a pupil of Lawrence's, an admirable but somewhat eccentric painter) left a sign behind him at Epsom, having had the audacity to initial it in one corner with "T. L., Greek Street," where Lawrence lived. The story goes that Harlow and Sir T. Lawrence had quarrelled and parted in anger; the younger painter thinking himself the aggrieved party. As a piece of revenge, he painted the sign, and not only put Lawrence's initials and address on it, but executed it exactly after the manner of that artist. By this he is said to have settled his bill; and he certainly annoyed his late master, who, on meeting the wicked sign-painter in Portland Place, accosted him with,

"Sir, if this were not a long street, I would have kicked you from one end of it to the other."

"Would you?" said Harlow. "Then I am glad it is a long street."

I think it was at this time that I first saw Dickens as an actor. He played the principal character in a piece called "The Frozen Deep," written by my old friend Wilkie Collins, in a theatre erected in the garden of Tavistock House. I append a bill of the play:

TAVISTOCK HOUSE THEATRE.

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. CHARLES DICKENS.

On Thursday, January 8th, 1857, AT A QUARTER BEFORE 8 O'CLOCK, *will be presented*

AN ENTIRELY NEW

ROMANTIC DRAMA, IN THREE ACTS, BY MR. WILKIE COLLINS,

CALLED

THE FROZEN DEEP.

The Machinery and Properties, by MR. IRELAND, *of the Theatre Royal, Adelphi. The Dresses by* MESSRS. NATHAN *of Titchbourne Street, Haymarket. Perruquier,* MR. WILSON, *of the Strand.*

THE PROLOGUE WILL BE DELIVERED BY MR. JOHN FORSTER.

CAPTAIN EBSWORTH, *of The Sea Mew*	MR. EDWARD PIGOTT.
CAPTAIN HELDING, *of The Wanderer*	MR. ALFRED DICKENS.
LIEUTENANT CRAYFORD	MR. MARK LEMON.
FRANK ALDERSLEY	MR. WILKIE COLLINS.
RICHARD WARDOUR	MR. CHARLES DICKENS.
LIEUTENANT STEVENTON	MR. YOUNG CHARLES.
JOHN WANT, *Ship's Cook*	MR. AUGUSTUS EGG, A.R.A.
BATESON, DARKER — *Two of The Sea Mew's People*	MR. EDWARD HOGARTH. / MR. FREDERICK EVANS.

(OFFICERS AND CREWS OF THE SEA MEW AND WANDERER.)

MRS. STEVENTON	MISS HELEN.
ROSE EBSWORTH	MISS KATE.
LUCY CRAYFORD	MISS HOGARTH.
CLARA BURNHAM	MISS MARY.
NURSE ESTHER	MRS. WILLS.
MAID	MISS MARTHA.

THE SCENERY AND SCENIC EFFECTS OF THE FIRST ACT, BY MR. TELBIN.

THE SCENERY & SCENIC EFFECTS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD ACTS, BY **Mr. STANFIELD, R.A.** ASSISTED BY MR. DANSON.

THE ACT-DROP, ALSO BY **Mr. STANFIELD, R.A.**

AT THE END OF THE PLAY, HALF-AN-HOUR FOR REFRESHMENT.

To Conclude with the Farce, in Two Acts, by Mr. BUCKSTONE, called

UNCLE JOHN

UNCLE JOHN	MR. CHARLES DICKENS.
NEPHEW HAWK	MR. WILKIE COLLINS.
FRIEND THOMAS	MR. MARK LEMON.
EDWARD EASEL	MR. AUGUSTUS EGG, A.R.A.
ANDREW	MR. YOUNG CHARLES.
NIECE HAWK	MISS HOGARTH.
ELIZA	MISS KATE.
MRS. COMFORT	MISS MARY.

Musical Composer and Conductor of the Orchestra—Mr. FRANCESCO BERGER, who will preside at the Piano.

CARRIAGES MAY BE ORDERED AT HALF-PAST ELEVEN.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Carlyle says Dickens's "real forte was acting, not writing." Carlyle has said many wise things, and, as he was human, he said some foolish ones; but none surely more foolish than that which I quote. I saw Dickens in all the characters he attempted, and I heard him read most of his works; and no one who has had a similar experience could be blind to the dramatic power with which he realized every character, either created by himself or others. That with training and experience he would have been a great actor there is no doubt. He would have been great in whatever career he might have pursued; but as a great actor stands to a great writer in about the same relation that a great engraver stands to a great painter, I submit that Carlyle was mistaken, unless he meant to imply that Dickens was not a great writer; in that case, like most of my fellow-creatures, I am at issue with him.

CHAPTER XXI.

"THE DERBY DAY."

As I have said earlier in these reminiscences, the shock that the first sight of a picture in the Exhibition causes to its author can with difficulty be imagined by artists even, who have not experienced the sensation; the influence of the surrounding works, the glare of frames, and the unaccustomed light, all combine to produce so complete a transformation as to create doubts that the black, dirty, inky thing that affronts you can be the clear, bright, effective production that was so admired by your friends and yourself before it left your painting-room. Wilkie felt the full force of this, for in speaking of his splendid "Chelsea Pensioners reading the Gazette announcing the Battle of Waterloo," he says: "This is the only instance of one of my pictures which has not suffered terribly by the Exhibition." My "Birthday" was a very painful example of the effect produced by its surroundings; being hung in a well-known and dreaded dark part of the large room, and being a low-toned picture, the consequences were dreadful. I can never forget the shock of the

first sight of it. Some one endeavoured to console me by saying that if a fine picture by an old master were hung in a modern Exhibition it would be destroyed. I was, and am still, inclined to agree with my friend, but I could find no consolation in the reflection; and I very soon discovered that my new effort was considered a great falling off from "Ramsgate Sands," some kind critics going so far as to say I was "done for;" the decline had begun, speedily to terminate in a series of performances disgraceful to myself and the body which had elected me so prematurely. For a time I was crushed, but a reaction soon took place. Though the subject of "The Birthday" offered no opportunity for the display of character and variety of incident that distinguished the "Sands," the execution of the picture was not inferior to its predecessor; and I felt sure that if I could find a theme capable of affording me the opportunity of showing an appreciation of the infinite variety of everyday life, I had confidence enough in my power of dealing with it successfully; but the subject—then, as now and ever, the chief difficulty—where was I to find a scene of such interest and importance as to warrant my spending months, perhaps a year or two, in representing it? Until the year of which I write—1854—I had never seen any of the great horse-races for which England is so famous, and my first experience of the modern Olympian games was at Hampton; when the idea occurred to me that if some of the salient points of the great gathering

could be grouped together, an effective picture might be the result. Mentioning this to a friend with whom I was walking about the course, he—or rather she, for my friend was a lady—declared her belief that it was impossible to represent such an enormous crowd on canvas at all, without producing confusion worse confounded. As we were walking along the course we met with an incident which, though impossible to be reproduced in a picture, may be related here. My eyes were wide open and my attention alive to everything surrounding me; and whilst watching a group of gipsies who were eating some of the remains of a Fortnum and Mason pie (that had been given them) near one of the booths, I happened to look into the booth itself. It was evidently one of the cheap dining-places so common on race-courses; for a long table covered with a white cloth, with plates at intervals, stretched from the course into the inner recess at the back. There were no diners, but a solitary man sat at the end of the table within a few feet of me, leaning his head upon his hand, seemingly in deep reflection. As I looked he suddenly raised his head, seized one of the dinner-knives from the table, and made a furious attempt to cut his throat. The knife was fortunately as blunt as those instruments usually are in better regulated dining-rooms than the booth at Hampton, and though the man injured himself considerably, judging from the ghastly pallor of his face, and the awful evidence on his be-ringed hands, I did not believe his attempt was fatal, for he was instantly

seized and prevented from repeating the attack. I heard afterwards that he had been a heavy loser; and my informant said, "The fool lost his money, but he won't lose his life; it wouldn't much matter if he did, for he ain't married, and he is an awful rip."

My first visit to Epsom was in the May of 1856—Blink Bonnie's year. My first Derby had no interest for me as a race, but as giving me the opportunity of studying life and character, it is ever to be gratefully remembered. Gambling-tents and thimble-rigging, prick in the garter and the three-card trick, had not then been stopped by the police. So convinced was I that I could find the pea under the thimble, that I was on the point of backing my guess rather heavily, when I was stopped by Egg, whose interference was resented by a clerical-looking personage, in language much opposed to what would have been anticipated from one of his cloth.

"You," said Egg, addressing the divine, "you are a confederate, you know; my friend is not to be taken in."

"Look here," said the clergyman, "don't you call names, and don't call *me* names, or I shall knock your d——d head off."

"Will you?" said Egg, his courage rising as he saw two policemen approaching. "Then I call the lot of you—the Quaker there, no more a Quaker than I am, and that fellow that thinks he looks like a farmer—you are a parcel of thieves!"

"So they are, sir," said a meek-looking lad who joined us; "they have cleaned me out.'

"Now move off; clear out of this!" said the police; and the gang walked away, the clergyman turning and extending his arms in the act of blessing me and Egg.

The acrobats with every variety of performance, the nigger minstrels, gipsy fortune-telling, to say nothing of carriages filled with pretty women, together with the sporting element, seemed to offer abundant material for the line of art to which I felt obliged—in the absence of higher gifts—to devote myself; and the more I considered the kaleidoscopic aspect of the crowd on Epsom Downs, the more firm became my resolve to attempt to reproduce it. As the time for observation was too short to allow of sketching, I endeavoured to make such mental notes as should help me in my proposed work. No time was lost on my return home, as I find by my diary that on May 21 I "began a rough drawing of 'Race-course,'" and on the 24th the "rough drawing" was finished. I cannot say I have ever found a difficulty in composing great numbers of figures into a more or less harmonious whole. I don't think this *gift*, or *knack*, can be acquired. Many artists with far greater powers than I possess fail utterly when they attempt compositions of more than three or four figures; while to me, the putting together of a small number of objects, either living or dead, presents difficulties occasionally almost insurmountable. I mention this as a warning to students never to attempt large compositions unless they feel they have the "gift" for work of the kind, the true sign

being the facility which they feel in its accomplishment. And granting the facility, too much time can scarcely be spent in making preliminary studies, always from nature, of separate figures and groups. I arranged the general lines of the composition of the "Derby Day" in what I call a rough charcoal drawing, as noted above; and after making numbers of studies from models for all the prominent figures, I went for my usual seaside holiday to Folkestone, and employed much of it very delightfully in preparing a small careful oil-sketch—with colour and effect finally planned—so that when I chose to begin the large picture, I found the "course clear" before me.

Mr. Jacob Bell had desired me to paint an important picture for him so soon as I found a subject agreeable to his taste and my own. On seeing the sketch of the "Derby Day," no time was lost in deliberation, for I was commissioned to paint a picture five or six feet long from it, at the price of fifteen hundred pounds; the copyright being reserved to me, and a reasonable time conceded for the loan of the picture for engraving. Many weeks were spent upon the large sketch, and a second one, now in the Bethnal Green Museum, was made; in which I tried a different arrangement of the principal group. It will be evident, then, that if the larger work failed, it would not be for lack of preparation. Before the picture was begun, the copyright for the engraving was purchased by Mr. Gambart, who agreed to pay fifteen hundred pounds for it. The

greater part of the year 1856, after exhibition of "The Birthday," was taken up by small pictures, some of them of a very pot-boiling character, and none worth noting in this place, or anywhere else. I may, perhaps, except the picture of an old woman accused of witchcraft, exhibited several years before, which I subjected to a treatment that I recommend for adoption under similar circumstances. After seeing the picture at Preston with a "fresh eye," I felt I could greatly improve it, and some changes—with the owner's sanction—I proceeded to effect, at a sacrifice of much time, and greatly to the advantage of the picture.

On the 20th of January my diary says: "First day's work on 'Race-course;' a long journey, but I go to it with a good heart, and if I live, doubt not a triumphant issue. Sketched in some of the figures in charcoal."

I wrote, February 9: "First day's painting on 'Race-course.' Miss Mortimer sat. Did two heads of carriage-ladies pretty well."

The main incident in the "Derby Day"—that of the acrobat and his hungry little boy—is too well known to need any description from me; as indeed are all the various passages of the picture, from the fact of its being prominently before the public in the form of engraving, as well as from its position in the National Gallery. In the Drury Lane pantomime I found the acrobat I wanted, and after the usual bargaining he agreed to come with his little son. The young gentleman was possessed with the idea

that sitting meant throwing continual somersaults; but that performance, amusing enough, did not advance my picture; and it was with much difficulty that I stopped his going head over heels into casts and draperies, to the confusion of both. The hands of the youth—not very clean to begin with—became so dirty that a visit to my lavatory was suggested. When he returned to us he said: "Oh, father! such a beautiful place! all mahoginy, and a chany basin to wash in!" One of my children came into the studio with a message: "Mamma says, papa, will the models want luncheon?"

"Mamma—papa!" said the little acrobat with contempt; "why don't you say father and mother, young un?"

"Don't you be cheeky!" said the parent.

I made a fairly satisfactory beginning; my difficulties greatly increased by the models being unused to their work. The father, indeed, became faint, and a turn in the garden was necessary. I soon saw that it would be impossible to use my acrobats in painting the whole of their figures, so by increased payment I acquired their dresses, which were donned by those to "the manner born." In such a complicated affair as the "Derby Day," models of every kind were wanted. I laid my children and friends largely under contribution, as well as professional models, one of whom, named Bishop, was so peculiar a character as to deserve more lengthened notice. He was a good fellow and a splendid sitter, but a little doubtful in keeping his appointments; he had much

trouble in passing a public-house without going into it first, and he sometimes stayed long and forgot his engagements. In the middle of my work he disappeared for six weeks. I found on inquiry that he had suddenly left his lodgings, and his landlady had no idea what had become of him. I had almost given up the hope of seeing him again, when one morning, to my great delight, he put in an appearance, looking like the ghost of his former self.

"Why, Bishop," said I, "where on earth have you been? You are looking very bad; have you been ill?"

"No, sir; but I haven't had much to eat where I've been—leastways not the sort I like. Skilly don't suit me."

"What's skilly?" said I; "and where have you been to get it?"

"Skilly is what they gives you when you get into quod, and that's where I've been."

"Quod!" said I; "prison! You don't mean to say you have been in prison?"

"Ah! I have though, sir; and I'll tell you how it was. After I left here last time as I was sitting, I goes towards my place, and just there by Palace Gardens I sees a crowd and a row going on, and I never can see nothing like that without just looking to see what it's all about; and there was a man using bad language to Mr. Webster, which I know well, and a nice gentleman he is, and I've often set for him. So I pushes in, and I says, 'Now what is it?' I says; 'what have you got to say to this here

gent, which is a friend of mine?' 'I'll say something and do something to you in a minute,' says a fellow; 'don't you interfere!' And if you'll believe me, sir, I thought he was going to hit Mr. Webster; so I gives him one for himself. And he turns to me, and we went at it hammer and tongs; and the police came and interfered, as they always does; and they laid hold of me, and one of 'em says I hit him. 'You've assaulted me in the exercise of my dooty,' he says, 'so I shall run you in.' And run me in he did; but it took more than him to do it, and they locked me up, and next morning I was took before the beak. The policeman swore as I assaulted him in the execution of his dooty. I told him it was a lie, and was giving him a little more of my mind, when the magistrate says, 'Silence, man!' he says. 'Go to prison for *three* weeks.' That made me wild, and I up and says, 'You call yourself a beak?' I says. 'Why, you ain't up to the situation; and I'll tell you what, I'm a artist's model, and I sits for them as draws for *Punch;* and I'll have you took and put in *Punch*, you just see if I don't.' The beak opened his mouth at that. He ain't often spoke to like that, you bet, sir; and after a bit he says, 'Now you will go to prison for *six* weeks;' and that's where I've been, sir."

"And very sorry you must have felt over the skilly for your impertinence to the magistrate," said I.

"Well, yes, I wish I hadn't a said it; but he made me that wild."

Bishop was a favourite model of Edwin Landseer's, who told me the following story of him. It appeared that to the profession of artist's model, Bishop added the business of a pig-dealer. He had tolerably large conveniences for the prosecution of that trade at his "place," in the form of styes, etc.—a favourite pig now and then sharing the kitchen with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop. As the object of the pig-dealer was to fatten his pigs for the market, much pig's food was necessary; and one day, when he was sitting to Landseer and bemoaning the difficulty of getting sufficient "wash" for his pigs, a bright idea seemed to strike him, and he said to the great painter:

"They tell me, sir, as you knows the Queen."

"Know the Queen? Of course I do. Everybody knows the Queen," said Landseer.

"Ah! but," said Bishop, "to speak to, you know, sir, *comfortable*."

"Well, I have had the honour of speaking to her Majesty many times. Why do you ask?"

"Well, sir, you see there must be such lots of pig-wash from Buckingham Palace and them sort of places most likely thrown away; and my missus and me thinks that if you was just to tip a word or two to the Queen—which is a real kind lady one and all says—she would give her orders, and I could fetch the wash away every week with my barrer."

In the left-hand corner of the picture stands a lady in a riding-habit. To those who remember the beautiful Miss Gilbert, my rendering of that witty, charming creature will not be satisfactory. The

face was perforce in shadow, and in profile, thus handicapping me terribly. I venture to think that Landseer's picture was scarcely more likely to satisfy the many admirers of my lovely model. In that work she was represented reclining by the side of a horse, whose vices were supposed to have been charmed away by the mysterious influence of "The Pretty Horse-Breaker" as she was afterwards christened. Miss Gilbert was a most accomplished horsewoman; indeed, she told me that the greater part of her life had been passed in the saddle, and she was never so happy as when galloping for dear life after a pack of hounds. In return for her kindness in sitting for me, I promised her a proof engraving of the picture. This was on the occasion of her last visit, and in reply to my telling her that she would have to wait at least three years for the print, she said, "Ah! never mind. I shall soon ride the time away."

Poor girl! She lived to receive her engraving; but she had done with time—rapid consumption had seized her, and death came in the prime of her youth and beauty. I had to thank my friend Mr. Tattersall for the introduction to Miss Gilbert, and for other valuable assistance during the progress of my picture. The owner, Mr. Bell, was also very useful to me in procuring models. Few people have a more extensive acquaintance, especially amongst the female sex, than that possessed by Jacob Bell; and what seemed singular, was the remarkable prettiness that distinguished nearly all these pleasant friends. I

had but to name the points required, and an example was produced.

"What is it to be this time?" he would say. "Fair or dark, long nose or short nose, Roman or aquiline, tall figure or small? Give your orders."

The order was given, and obeyed in a manner that perfectly astonished me. I owe every female figure in the "Derby Day," except two or three, to the foraging of my employer.

"What kind of person do you want for that young woman with the purse in her hand, listening to that spooney fellow—lover, I suppose?"

"I should like a tall, fair woman. Handsome, of course," I replied.

"All right. I know the very thing. Been to the Olympic lately?"

"No."

"Well, go and see Miss H——. I don't know her. Hear she is charming in all ways. Sure she will sit. You go and see her. I'll manage the rest."

To the theatre I went, and found the lady all that could be desired; and in a few days she made her first appearance in my painting-room. Miss H—— was a very delightful person, and she sat admirably. She was undeniably handsome; but I failed miserably, indeed unaccountably, in my attempts—again and again renewed—to reproduce the charm that was before me. At last I felt that I must either rub out what I had done and seek another model, or let my work go with a very serious blot in the centre

of it. I did not hesitate long, for after a last and futile attempt I erased the figure; and repainted it from one of my own daughters. I need scarcely say that I waited till Miss H—— had departed before taking a step that I knew would be very annoying to her; and it cost me many pangs before I could persuade myself that it was my duty to inflict any amount of pain upon that lady and myself, rather than allow a serious blemish to disfigure my work. Miss H—— was an excellent actress; but she surpassed herself by the passion she displayed when she saw the "Derby Day" in my room on its completion. We were alone, fortunately perhaps. I felt like a guilty culprit about to be sentenced.

"Why, what is this? Great heaven! you have rubbed me out! This is the most insul—— What does it mean?"

"The truth is, Miss H——, I am truly sorry, but I found——"

"And if I had given place to something better—but to be displaced—to be rubbed out for such a baby-faced chit as that——"

"Well, Miss H——, I couldn't. It's my fault. I tried very hard, as you——"

"And all the people at the theatre knew of my sitting for the thing, and I shall be laughed at."

"Oh! I hope not. I will explain," said I.

"Why didn't you say at first that I was of no use to you, instead of putting me to the trouble of coming here and exposing myself to the sneers of the—oh! it's enough to make one's blood boil!"

It evidently was, and the only way for me was to stand by till the boiling was over; so I betook myself to silence, and I listened to a storm of well-deserved abuse, delivered in a style that would have "brought down the house," if the audience could have appreciated true passion. Miss H—— had every reason for indignation, as I fully acknowledged to her when she became cooler; and eventually I think she must have forgiven me, for she accepted a proof of the engraving as a mark of my contrition. If these lines should meet the eye of my kind but unfortunate sitter, I hope she will believe that to this hour I regret the annoyance I occasioned her. I remember telling the misadventure to Miss Gilbert, and explaining to her the necessity for allowing nothing to interfere with the successful production of a work of art, and closing my observations by an illustration, for I said:

"Now take your own figure there," pointing to the lady in the riding-habit. "If I had failed in it to the extent I did with Miss H——'s, I would have rubbed it out without hesitation."

"Would you?" replied the lady; "then I would without hesitation have put my parasol through your picture, and if Miss H—— had served you right, she would have done the same."

My determination to keep the horses as much in the background of my "Derby Day" as possible, did not arise from the fact of my not being able to paint them properly, so much as from my desire that the human being should be paramount. Still it was

impossible to avoid the steeds and their riders altogether. There I found my friend Tattersall of great service. He procured an excellent type of the jockey class—a delightful little fellow, who rode a wooden horse in my studio with all the ease of rein and whip that would have distinguished a winner of the Derby. He surprised me by his endurance of a painful attitude—that of raising himself in his stirrups and leaning forward, in the manner of his tribe. This he would do for an hour at a stretch. I find my diary says:

"Bundy" (the name of the jockey) "sat for the last time; finished the two jockeys, and one in the distance in his great-coat; and the little chap and I shook hands. I to work; he to the Marquis of Something at Chantilly."

Before he left me, he informed me that he would rather ride the wildest horse that ever lived than mount the wooden one any more. I am indebted to Herring, one of the best painters of the racehorse I have ever known, for great assistance in the very small share the high-mettled racer has in my work. I grieve to say that my little jockey friend was soon after killed by a fall from his horse in France.

My diary for 1857 shows day after day of incessant work, with exceptions of enforced idleness through foggy and dark weather. For some time before that of which I write, I had ceased to paint on Sundays, believing that one day in seven was required for rest. I suppose there never was a more industrious

painter, or one who produced a greater quantity of good work, than my old friend Sydney Cooper, R.A., whom I once heard say in reply to an inquiry as to whether he painted on Sundays :

"No. If I can't get my living in six days, I shouldn't manage it in seven."

And putting aside graver reasons for not pursuing the habit, I would advise all students to set apart one day in seven for rest. I attribute my long-continued good health to my perseverance in the practice that I recommend.

After fifteen months' incessant labour, the "Derby Day" was finished, and sent to the Exhibition of 1858. It is difficult to put one's finger on the precise spot where confidence merges into conceit. I acknowledge any amount of conviction that I was doing an out-of-the-way thing, as the letters that I am about to quote will prove ; but I deny the conceit, if I should be charged with it. And when such men as Maclise and Landseer used expressions of praise warm enough to have tried stronger heads than mine, I felt my confidence in the success of my work was fully justified. As an instance of generous appreciation I append a note from Maclise :

"14, Russell Place, Fitzroy Square,
"March 25th, 1858.

"MY DEAR FRITH,

"It will give me great pleasure to join you at the dinner-hour on Monday.

"I imagine you still very busy at your work

('Derby Day'), but only dropping in here and there little gem-like bits into the beautiful mosaic you have so skilfully put together.

"Believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"DANL. MACLISE."

The following is an extract from a letter to my sister, with whom, since my mother's death, I have kept up a constant correspondence. Under date March 6, I find this mixture of jest and earnest:

"We shall be delighted to see you at any time that you choose to honour us with a visit; and if you wish to see the famous picture at all, you must see it in my own place, for you won't be able to get near it in the Exhibition. Some people go so far as to say 'It is the picture of the age,' and no mean judges are they. However, the die is cast, and though I shall work incessantly up to the last moment, nothing that I can do now will make or mar my work; and if it is not pre-eminently successful, thus lifting my reputation into the seventh heaven, I shall burn my books, and fling my wand into fathomless ocean."

Again, under date May 9, when the picture was on the walls in Trafalgar Square, I wrote:

"When the Queen came into the large room, instead of, as she invariably did, looking at the pictures in their order according to the catalogue, she went at once to mine; and after a little while sent for me and complimented me in the highest and

kindest manner. She said it 'was a wonderful work,' and much more that modesty prevents my repeating. Now if I were of a conceited turn, I might be in danger; but though I plead guilty to a good deal of confidence, I am not guilty of conceit, at any rate in my secret soul; for I have the meanest opinion of my own powers compared with those 'glorious old lamps' that have survived criticism, and, as Sass used to say, 'received the approbation of ages.'"

It was on this occasion that the Prince Consort surprised me exceedingly by his intimate knowledge of what I may call *the conduct* of a picture. He told me why I had done certain things, and how, if a certain change had been made, my object would have been assisted. How the masses of light and shade might still be more evenly balanced, and how some parts of the picture might receive still more completion. I put many of the Prince's suggestions to the proof after the close of the Exhibition, and I improved my picture in every instance. There were several little Princes and Princesses in the Royal party; and I remember one little boy saying, the moment he looked at the picture:

"Oh, mamma, I never saw so many people together before!"

"Nonsense!" said the Queen. "You have often seen many more."

"But not in a picture, mamma."

Again the inevitable diary says:

"*May* 2.—Private view. All the people crowd about the 'Derby Day.'"

"*May* 3.—Opening day of the Exhibition. Never was such a crowd seen round a picture. The secretary obliged to get a policeman to keep the people off. He is to be there from eight in the morning. Bell applies to the Council for a rail, which will not be granted."

Since the foundation of the Academy in 1768, it had only once been found necessary to protect a popular picture from possible injury by the presence of too eager spectators, and that occurred in 1822, when Wilkie exhibited his famous picture of "The Chelsea Pensioners reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo." Readers of Wilkie's life may remember his extreme difficulty in persuading the R.A. authorities to afford him the protection his work so much needed; they were naturally reluctant to mark a particular work with such an invidious proof of its popularity. Academic nature seems to be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; for inferior though my work was in all respects to Wilkie's, it was as much in need of protection, and I found the same difficulty in procuring it, as the following letters will show. Mr. Bell writes:

"May 4, 1858.

"My dear Frith,

"I went to the R.A. this afternoon about five. The pressure had to some extent subsided, but there was a policeman still in attendance, and people three or four deep before the picture. Those in front had their faces within three or four inches

of the canvas. The nature of the picture requires a close inspection to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it; and from what I have seen, I think it not unlikely that some of the readers will leave their mark upon it, unless means be taken to keep them at a respectful distance.

"Yours truly,

"JACOB BELL."

Again, on the following day he writes:

"I called at the R.A. this afternoon at four o'clock, as I was passing, and found the people smelling the picture like bloodhounds. In the National Gallery, where I went next to see the new old masters, I found post and rail very suitable for the protection of works of art."

Then came a formal appeal to the President and Council.

"GENTLEMEN,

"I have just left the Royal Academy, where I found Mr. Frith's picture in great danger of injury from the pressure of the crowd. It has been found necessary to place it under the charge of a policeman, who can with difficulty preserve it from contact with the arms and faces of those in the front rank, who are pressed forward by those behind them. My object in addressing you is to request, as a great favour, that, if the laws of the Royal Academy permit, a rail may be placed before it for the protection of the picture.

"I have the honour to be, sirs,

"JACOB BELL."

This appeal was successful, and the needed protection supplied, as my diary shows by entry on

"*May* 7.—To the Exhibition. Knight tells me a rail is to be put round my picture. Hooray!"

"*May* 8.—Couldn't help going to see the rail, and there it is sure enough; and loads of people."

Apropos of this, I may insert the following bantering letter to my sister:

"You must really come to town, if it is only to see a rarity in the annals of exhibitions—no less than an iron rail round the 'Derby Day,' an event that has occurred once in ninety years. I mean once before this once, and that was when Wilkie exhibited 'The Chelsea Pensioners,' in 1822. On that occasion, thirteen of the elderly Academicians took to their beds in fits of bile and envy; and though a few recovered by steadily refusing medicine, they never were in good health afterwards. This calamity was the cause of a resolution on the part of the Academicians in full conclave, that so invidious a distinction should never, under any circumstances, be made again; and when Messrs. Bell and Gambart, the proprietors of the 'Derby Day' and the copyright thereof, took oath and said they verily believed their property was in danger, the Secretary pointed to the towers of Westminster Abbey, just visible through the windows, under which repose the ashes of those distinguished men who fell victims to Wilkie, and then solemnly asked if a similar sacrifice was to be offered to Frith.

"'No,' said that official; 'rather let the picture

be scattered to the winds of Trafalgar Square; but be not alarmed, we have had popular works here before. There have been trifles by Landseer and Wilkie against which the public nose has been as severely rubbed as it is likely to be against the "Race-course;" and I assure you, on the part of the President and Council, that though a rail was once put round a picture of distinguished merit and popularity, such an "unfair distinction" will never be made again.

"So spake the Secretary; but at last it was found necessary (to be serious, I know not how the matter came about) to risk the lives of the envious old boys, for when I went down to the rooms yesterday, I found my precious work protected by a stout iron railing, against which broke a tide of anxious humanity. The oldest frequenter of exhibitions (like the oldest inhabitant that you have heard of) says the like of this attraction was never seen; and I must say, also, that in all my experience I never witnessed anything like the conduct of the crowd. The man who takes the money at the doors says the receipts are some hundreds more than usual, but that is owing to the generally attractive character of the Exhibition. You know I told you I should win the trick this time, and I have won it, my dear, without the slightest mistake."

On the whole, my brother artists were complimentary, but there were exceptions. One Academician of what is called the "high-aim" school, by which is meant a peculiar people who aim high and

nearly always miss; and who very much object to those who aim much lower and happen to hit—he said to me, looking at the crowd round my picture:

"That thing of yours is very popular; but I intend to exhibit a work next year that will have a greater crowd about it than that.

"Indeed," said I. "And what is your subject?"

"Well, I have not quite fixed on the title yet; but I think I shall call it 'Monday Morning at Newgate'—the hanging morning, you know. I shall have a man hanging, and the crowd about him. Great variety of character, you know. I wonder you never thought of it."

Another of my Academic brethren who had seen the picture in my studio, and had nearly smothered me with praise of it to my face, was heard to deliver his real opinion to a friend in the Exhibition, to whom he said, pointing to the evidences of the attractiveness of the picture: "There is no hope for art in this country, when the people are so besotted as to crowd round such a thing as that."

It is very unusual to see livery servants in the Exhibition. As a rule, their interest in art is not strong enough to induce them to part with the necessary shilling for admission. A friend of mine was startled one day by seeing two grooms, who had either been sent by their master, or of their own motive had evidently come to see the "Derby Day," for they made their way straight to it; and without looking at any other picture they entered the crowd and passed slowly by the picture, eagerly

studying it. My friend, curious to hear their comments, followed them closely. Not a word was said till they had thoroughly examined the picture, when one exclaimed to the other: "Call that the Derby? It's d——d hot! Come and have a drink."

I suppose there is scarcely a man in a position that can be called public, who has escaped hearing something unpleasant about himself from a critic who is ignorant of the personality of the assailed.

Sir Francis (then Mr.) Grant, the well-known portrait-painter, told me that he found himself sitting next to an old gentleman at a large dinner-party just after the opening of the Annual Exhibition, when the conversation, to one's sorrow, is sure to bristle with allusions to the exhibits. From his neighbour's first question, Grant discovered his ignorance of the name of his fellow-guest.

"Are you fond of pictures, sir?" said the old gentleman.

"Yes," said Grant; "if they are good ones."

"Then take my advice, and don't throw away a shilling on the Exhibition, for you won't find any there."

"Oh! but I have been to the Exhibition, and I can't quite agree with you."

"Perhaps you have spent your time better than in studying modern art?" said the old critic. "I have had a long experience of it—indeed, I practise it a little—and I can assure you there is not a good picture in the place. The portraits are detestable; and I really think the Academy should have a

separate room entirely for those wretched productions—a kind of 'chamber of horrors,' you know, like the waxworks in Baker Street."

"Do you really think so?" said Grant. "They seemed to me rather above the average."

"No, I assure you," was the reply. "I couldn't find a decent thing amongst them; and as for those portraits by Grant, they seem as if he had painted them with whitewash."

This was said in a loud tone, and Grant observed:

"I think you should be a little more cautious in what you say, for Mr. Grant might be present; in fact he is here—he is sitting next to you."

"Good gracious! But how—what" (looking to a lady on his right)—"are you—eh?"

"Yes," said Grant.

When the "Derby Day" was in the Exhibition, I had a somewhat similar experience. I took a lady in to dinner, to whom I was introduced of course; but she could not have heard my name, for she asked me exactly the same question as the old gentleman had asked Grant, and, as well as I can remember, I made a similar reply. My lady friend then proceeded to enlighten me as to the merits and demerits of many of the more notable pictures in the Exhibition; and she showed quite a remarkable knowledge of the good and bad qualities of the various works. She was really a very sincere lover of art; and from my constantly agreeing with nearly all she said, she was under the impression that I was

deriving knowledge that would help me at other dinner-tables, besides opening my mind to previously unobserved beauties. After giving me a sort of lecture, she said suddenly, "By the way, there is a picture which we have not discussed yet. You must have seen it—I mean that representation of a race-course. I hope we shall agree in our estimate of that, as we have in so many instances. Now, to me, what is called the 'Derby Day' is in a very low style of art—it is vulgar. Perhaps you may say such a scene is necessarily vulgar. There I should join issue with you. A refined painter would have elevated the scene, have filled it with life and character; have given grace and beauty even to women who go to Epsom. All these qualities are conspicuous by their absence in Mr. Frith's picture. It is ill drawn, flat, and poor in the painting of it," etc., etc.

As my critic ran on, I felt the sincerest pity for her, for I made up my mind that I must confess myself to be the author of the maligned production; and this I did in a bungling fashion enough, for I said: "I am sorry you don't like it, for I painted it."

Never, never shall I forget that poor lady's distress. I tried to help her, I forget how, but I know I tried. Then she was unfortunate, for she fled from her colours.

"Of course," she stuttered, "I really had no idea —but then, of course, it is a very clever picture; but I confess I don't like the subject."

"No more do I," I declared; "but then you must

not quarrel with copper because it is not gold. If I attempted history, or what you call high art, I should make a greater fool of myself than I am generally considered to be."

"Of course you would."

And with this remark our art talk closed. We afterwards became fast friends, and my lady critic became a frequent visitor on Show-Sundays; and though she had no sympathy with my art, being tainted with pre-Raphaelitism, she often showed as much acuteness in her remarks as many a professional critic.

One more example of sincere opinion, and I leave the subject. My friend Egg, R.A., was a constant exhibitor, so long as his delicate health would permit; and one private-view day he was seen leaning on the arm of a friend, when a gentleman—a stranger to Egg—approached the man who was Egg's temporary support, saying:

"I can't agree with you about the Exhibition; it seems to me much below the average. And as to your friend Egg's pictures, I think they are beastly."

"That is a very unfortunate remark, for this is Mr. Egg."

"So it is—I am sorry. Well, I will go and look again; I may have been hasty in my judgment."

Presently the gentleman returned, and said:

"Well, Mr. Egg, I need scarcely say that if I had known who you were I should have been reticent in my remarks. I apologize; but I am sorry to say I cannot change my opinion."

I confess I prefer this finale to the one adopted by my lady friend.

The attraction of the "Derby Day" continued up to the closing of the Exhibition, and after being returned to me and receiving some finishing-touches, it was sent to Paris, where it was admirably engraved by Blanchard. The picture then left this country for its travels abroad, first to the Antipodes, then to America, and amongst other places to Vienna, where it procured me the honour of election to the Austrian Academy. The success of the "Derby Day" confirmed me in my determination to paint the life about me; but then came the terrible difficulty of finding a satisfactory subject. As a stop-gap, I began a small picture of a lady waiting to cross a street, with a little boy crossing-sweeper besieging her in the usual fashion. A model for the lady was easily found, and there was a large field of selection open to me as regarded the boy. I discovered a young gentleman with closely-cropped hair, naked feet, and a wonderful broom—in all respects what I desired, except in regard of honesty; and for a further description of this young person and his unsuccessful attempt to rob me, I must refer my reader to my chapters on "Models." I may note here the impression the youth made upon me at his first sitting. In my diary under date 17th July, I find:

"A low, dull Irish boy for crossing-sweeper, one degree removed from a pig. Found great difficulty; rubbed in the head and figure."

From long study of "the human face divine," I

have acquired—or think I have—a knowledge of the character and disposition that certain features and expressions betray. First of all, the features seem to lend themselves to particular indulgences, which, being cherished, mark many faces indelibly. To illustrate my theory, I relate the following facts:

A very eminent artist friend and I were summoned as witnesses to the Old Bailey. It was the first day of session, and the prisoners were what is called arraigned. That proceeding consists in placing ten or a dozen of them in the dock together, whilst an officer of the Court reads over the different charges—leaving his hearers without any clue as to the perpetrator of a special crime. Amongst the charges was one of a peculiarly dreadful character; and when the prisoners had all left the dock, I said to my friend:

"Have you made up your mind which it was of that set who committed that terrible thing?"

"Yes," said he; "the parson, I think."

"That is the man," said I.

The parson was a gentlemanly-looking young man, rather handsome, but with the trail of the serpent palpable over his animal face. Curiously, he was the first to be placed upon trial; he was defended with admirable skill by one of the most eminent barristers, and acquitted; but our conviction of his guilt remained unshaken. A year or two after the trial I found myself in the company of a solicitor whose name, if I were to mention it, would be known to most of my readers. Our conversation

turned on my favourite theory. "Rubbish," said the solicitor; "there's nothing in it."

Whereupon I proceeded to relate my Old Bailey experience, carefully avoiding any mention of the name of the suspected clergyman. I was listened to attentively, and when I had finished my story, the solicitor said:

"Was the man's name So-and-so?"

"It was," said I, greatly surprised.

"Ah!" said the lawyer, "the fellow was guilty. We instructed P——, and he knew it. The clergyman is now undergoing five years' penal servitude for a similar offence."

My little crossing-sweeper's face warned me not to leave him alone in my painting-room; I neglected the warning, with the consequences related elsewhere.

I find I was occupied at this time on a picture intended for an artist friend, whose career was somewhat remarkable. I made the acquaintance of my friend—whom I will call MacIlray, a Scotchman—in Paris; when I was studying in the Louvre, in 1840. I was attracted by his pleasant manners, and by some excellent copying on which he was occupied. Like many of his countrymen he was not overburdened with riches, but he seemed to have a good prospect of creating some by the exercise of his profession. On my return to London I introduced MacIlray to the set of young men with whom I was intimate, and he became a great favourite with all of us. He had scarcely had time to make a mark in the Exhibition when a singular piece of good fortune

befell him. He had painted several portraits, and amongst his sitters was a charming widow who possessed in her own right six thousand a year. They bewitched one another, and immediate marriage was the result. There is no blessing, I suppose, that is quite unalloyed, and the drawback to my friend's perfect bliss was the impossibility of a Scottish laird —with all the duties connected with the position, being able to devote himself to a profession which requires all a man's energies to insure success. But if MacIlray could no longer paint, he could be the cause of painting in others; and this took the kind and graceful form of commissions for pictures to all his friends. The price to be paid for each work was a hundred guineas. We might take what subject we pleased, but each picture must contain a portrait of the artist painted by himself. I think every one, in course of time, executed MacIlray's order; and I hear that the pictures are intended eventually to become the nucleus of a national collection in a Scottish town. I hear also that under careful management the six thousand a year has been transformed into nearly double that amount; and if my old friend—who will easily recognise himself under the pseudonym I have used—should read these lines, I hope he will forgive the introduction of them for the sake of "auld lang syne."

So convinced was I that I should henceforth devote myself entirely to modern-life subjects that I was on the point of getting rid of a rather large collection of costumes of all ages. It was well I did

not, for I have found great use for them in these latter days.

My summer holiday of 1858 was spent at Weymouth, where, with work and play, I had what the Yankees call "a good time." I was very fond of shooting in those days, and having many friends in the neighbourhood of Weymouth I took my fill of sport of all kinds, including one day's hunting which I shall never forget. In my youth I had been accustomed to riding, and by the advice of my doctor, who thought horse-exercise good for all who could get it, I bought a horse which, if not thorough-bred, had all the exuberance of spirit with which that class of animal is credited. If my work had occupied me till it was too late to ride, or if the weather made that exercise impossible, my horse—or, to speak correctly, my mare—became so excited by the prospect of a canter, as to make the avoidance of the vehicles that crowd Westbourne Grove a matter of difficulty. This and other peculiarities caused our parting eventually, without regret on my side, after several unsuccessful attempts on the part of the mare to break my neck. She accompanied me to Weymouth, and she took me out hunting, regardless of my disinclination for that popular sport, as I shall proceed to show. I went to see the hounds "thrown off," as it is called, which, being interpreted, signifies the discovery and immediate pursuit of a fox—the hounds being followed by what is called "the field," meaning just as many of the lookers-on as choose to follow to the death. I had

no intention whatever of joining the pursuers, but my mare was of a different disposition. I was in the saddle quietly smoking and talking to a friend, when a terrific noise burst upon us. The yelping of dogs, halloing of men, horn-blowing, together with the galloping of horses in every direction, nearly maddened me, and quite maddened my mare. Away went my cigar, she reared, she plunged, she flew this way and that, as if doubtful of the proper direction, till, seemingly making up her mind, she tore at a furious pace after a crowd of riders, into whose midst she carried me in spite of all my efforts to stop her; in fact, I lost all control of the creature, and never regained it until the hunting was over, late in the afternoon. Never can I forget the six hours' agony I spent on that wretch's back; and then the advice those red-coated villains kept giving me:

"Keep her head straight, sir! Don't pull her; that will never do."

"Give her her head and let her go; take that fence and ditch, that will take it out of her."

"You shouldn't have come out to hounds on a green horse."

"That gent on the chestnut will come to grief, by G—!"

"You would really be safer inside, sir."

"Get off and lead her."

"Really, sir, you must get out of the way; back her into the cover."

"If that gentleman does not get out of the way I shall ride over him, as sure as the devil's in London!"

These remarks and compliments were made to me by a series of red ruffians when I was in a condition of pallor and perspiration, striving, with every nerve that remained to me, to keep my seat and get out of their confounded way. I vowed most solemnly that if I were permitted to see the high-road again I would never leave it for furze-bushes and turnip-fields, from which my despairing eyes could see no exit but over a hedge; hideous swamps full of concealed holes, difficult enough to ride over on a horse in its right mind by a dare-devil with no family ties—how perilous, then, for a timid man on an infuriated beast, with the conviction staring him in the face that any moment might see his wife and family deprived of their natural protector!

To this hour it is a wonder to me that I didn't break my neck. Often and often during that terrible day I was more off the mare than on her—at one moment thrown forward on to her neck, at another nearly slipping off her tail. I had the courage of despair, for I knew that if I were thrown the hunters would ride over me with pleasure; and if that casualty had befallen me in one of those covers, they must have done so, for the rides—as they call passages about as wide as a good front-door—made it almost impossible for two people on horseback to pass each other, and those fellows rode as if they were possessed. The huntsman galloped past me and actually blew his filthy horn into my horse's ears. She tossed up her head and struck me a violent blow on the nose, and so confused me that I

thought I must have gone then; one foot was out of the stirrup, and I gave myself up for lost. But the good little cherub that sits somewhere or other had an eye upon me, and I live to tell the tale, and to "make a vow and keep it strong," that I will never again put myself in the position of having to follow the hounds.

CHAPTER XXII.

PORTRAIT OF CHARLES DICKENS.

In the fragment of English history left to us by Macaulay, an account may be found of a celebrated highwayman called Claude Duval—a handsome youth who managed to disgrace himself and a good family, of which he was the offshoot, by ruinous dissipation of every kind, ending by "taking to the road" at the head of a formidable gang. The young fellow had been page to the Duke of Richmond, whose fatherly attempts to reclaim him were fruitless. The story goes that on a wild heath, a carriage in which the beautiful Lady Aurora Sydney was travelling was stopped by Duval's gang, the trunks were plundered, and a booty of four hundred pounds secured; but a portion of the plunder was restored, on condition of the lady dancing a coranto on the heath with Captain Duval. The dramatic character of the subject attracted me. I thought if I could succeed in retaining the beauty of the lady, combined with the terror that she would feel, I should perform a feat well worthy of achievement. The dresses of the period were very picturesque; the contrast

between the robbers, and the lady and her companions, would be very striking; and the lumbering carriage, with its complement of heavy Flanders horses, might combine to make a satisfactory picture. In the absence of a modern-life inspiration, I proceeded with the preliminary drawings and the oil-sketch for Claude Duval. The time unoccupied by shooting and hunting during my Weymouth holiday was devoted to a careful oil-study. I have often pondered over the varied knowledge that an artist must acquire to enable him to master the difficulties that each fresh subject presents. No doubt human nature is always the same, but manners are for ever changing; those of two hundred years ago are quite unlike those of to-day. By reading and thinking the student should endeavour to identify himself with a bygone time. Customs also may be learnt from many authorities; so, with much difficulty, may the dresses be studied in which our ancestors lived and moved. To enable me to struggle successfully with my contemplated subject, this variety of information must be acquired. What is the dance called the "Coranto"? For some time I could learn nothing about it; no such dance, or anything like it, exists at the present time. In my trouble I applied to an authority in old-world costumes—Mr. Fairholt—who most kindly supplied me with the description of the dance, accompanied by drawings of the performers; and though engravings of the carriages used in the days of Charles II. were plentiful, it was desirable to find the thing itself, if

such a discovery were possible. I have forgotten who it was that told me I might find a carriage nearly, if not quite, as old as the days of the "merry monarch," at Cobham Park, the seat of Lord Darnley, to whom I immediately wrote for permission to make a sketch of it, if the news of his being possessed of such a relic were true. I here quote from a letter written to my sister at the time:

"Lord Darnley was very civil, and sent me permission. I went and found the quaintest old thing you can conceive, all begilt and carved, with such great leather straps and buckles, and the queerest seat for the driver and for the footmen behind. To think of the old carriage outliving its occupants so long! How they must have gone to Court in it, in their flounces, swords, and ruffles. There it is, and here they are not. Such is life, as Mrs. Gamp hath it."

I painted the "blasted heath" from a study made in Dorsetshire, where I also found the withered tree which plays a prominent part in the composition of the picture. I have elsewhere told the student to go to nature for every detail in his picture; I cannot repeat the advice too often, that no dependence should be placed on memory whilst a possibility exists of referring directly to nature. The picture proceeded pretty satisfactorily, and was purchased during its progress by Mr. Flatow, the picture-dealer, at the agreeable price of seventeen hundred pounds—

which sum also included the sketch and copyright. The worthy dealer is described elsewhere. Of this picture I may add that it was very soon "placed," to use the common phrase, with a Mr. Grapel, whose passion for it speedily cooled; for he parted from it with advantage to his pocket, I believe—in favour of I know not whom—not long after it became his property.

The year 1859 was mainly devoted to the picture of "Claude Duval," but there were many interruptions from the necessity of my keeping promises respecting small pictures. It was at this time that John Forster called upon me to paint a portrait of his friend Dickens. I need scarcely say with what delight, mixed with fear, I heard of this commission—delight because of my veneration for the author, and my love for the man; fear that I might fail, as so many had done already. Forster had hinted his wish to me a year or two before, when Dickens had adopted the moustache—a hirsute appendage of which Forster had a great horror; and with reason, as regarded Dickens, for it partly covered, and certainly injured, a very handsome and characteristic mouth. "This is a whim—the fancy will pass. We will wait till the hideous disfigurement is removed," said Forster; but we waited in vain. Indeed, we waited till the beard was allowed to grow upon the chin as well as upon the upper lip, so, fearing that if we waited longer there would be little of the face to be painted, if whiskers were to be added to the rest, the order was given and the portrait begun. As I

had heard that portrait-painters had often derived advantage from photography, I asked Dickens to give me a meeting at Mr. Watkins's, who was thought one of the best photographers of that day. Apropos of this arrangement came the following from Dickens:

"Gads Hill,
"Sunday, January 4, 1859.

"MY DEAR FRITH,

"I want to stay here a week longer than I proposed to myself, in order that I may have leisure and quiet to consider something I am turning in my mind. I hope, therefore, it will not put you out if I suggest that it would be a great convenience to me to have our appointment with Watkins for Monday week instead of Monday.

"Ever very faithfully yours,
"CHARLES DICKENS."

Again, on the 12th he writes:

'MY DEAR FRITH,

"At eleven on Monday morning next the gifted individual whom you will transmit to posterity will be at Watkins's. Table also shall be there, and chair—velvet coat likewise, if the tailor should have sent it home. But the garment is more to be doubted than the man whose signature here follows.

"Faithfully yours always,
"CHARLES DICKENS."

And on the 19th he says:

"MY DEAR FRITH,

"The 'properties' shall be ready, and nothing shall scare the undersigned, whose faith is great.

"Ever faithfully,

"C. D."

In due course the photograph was taken; but not very successfully, nor did I derive the slightest assistance from it in the prosecution of the portrait. The change in Dickens's appearance that had taken place during the twenty-five years that had elapsed since Maclise had painted him so admirably, was very striking. The sallow skin had become florid, the long hair of 1835 had become shorter and darker, and the expression settled into that of one who had reached the topmost rung of a very high ladder, and was perfectly aware of his position. I find the first entry of Dickens's sittings under date

"*Jan.* 21.—Arranged Dickens's portrait till he came at 1.30. He sat delightfully. I drew his head in outline, he talking all the while. The result will be successful."

Then, next day:

"Dickens again. Miss Hogarth and his daughter came with him, and remained two and a half hours. Got in the head in colours. Dickens most pleasant. No wonder people like him."

"*Friday, Jan.* 28.—Dickens came at 12. A good and long sitting. Feel quite assured of success."

Between Maclise's picture and my own, many portraits of Dickens had been taken, most of them—indeed, according to the sitter himself, all of them—absolute failures. I was curious with regard to one which I knew had been begun, but not finished, by an eminent Academician; and during one of the sittings to me, I inquired the reason of the delay.

"Well, the truth is," said Dickens, "I sat a great many times. At first the picture bore a strong resemblance to Ben Caunt" (a prize-fighter of that day); "then it changed into somebody else; and at last I thought it was time to give it up, for I had sat there and looked at the thing till I felt I was growing like it."

On our conversation turning on the preconceived idea that people always entertain of celebrities in literature or art, to whose personal appearance they are strangers, he said he had had frequent experience of the dismay which seemed to take possession of persons on their first introduction to him. "And they occasionally allow their disappointment to take the form of positive objection. For instance," said he—"Scheffer, who is a big man, I believe, in your line—said, the moment he saw me, 'You are not at all like what I expected to see you; you are like a Dutch skipper.' As for the picture he did of me, I can only say that it is neither like me nor a Dutch skipper."

In my own small way I told him I had had a similar experience, for on being introduced to a North-country art patron, he said:

"You don't look a bit like an artist. I should have put you down for a well-to-do farmer."

"Yes," rejoined Dickens, "and then they look at you as if it was your fault—and one for which you deserve to be kicked—because you fail to realize their ideal of what you ought to be."

It was at this time that Dickens commenced the public readings of his works, and they became immediately very popular as well as profitable. I availed myself of his offer of tickets of admission to Hanover Square Rooms, and heard him read the trial from "Pickwick," and from some other novel, the name of which I forget. It seems a bold thing for me to say, but I felt very strongly that the author had totally misconceived the true character of one of his own creations. In reading the humorous repartees and quaint sayings of Sam Weller, Dickens lowered his voice to the tones of one who was rather ashamed of what he was saying, and afraid of being reproved for the freedom of his utterances. I failed in being able to reconcile myself to such a rendering of a character that of all others seemed to me to call for an exactly opposite treatment. Sam is self-possessed, quick, and never-failing in his illustrations and rejoinders, even to the point of impudence.

When I determined to tell the great author that he had mistaken his own work, I knew I should be treading on dangerous ground. But on the occasion of a sitting, when my victim was more than ever good-tempered, I unburthened my mind, giv-

ing reasons for my objections. Dickens listened, smiled faintly, and said not a word. A few days after this my friend Elmore asked my opinion of the readings, telling me he was going to hear them, and I frankly warned him that he would be disappointed with the character of Sam Weller. A few days more brought a call from Elmore, who roundly abused me for giving him an utterly false account of the Weller episode.

"Why," he said, "the sayings come from Dickens like pistol-shots; there was no 'sneaking' way of talking, as you described it."

"Can it be possible," thought I, "that this man, who, as it is told of the great Duke of Wellington, never took anybody's opinion but his own, has adopted from my suggestion a rendering of one of the children of his brain diametrically opposed to his own conception of it?"

At the next sitting all was explained, for on my telling Dickens what Elmore had said, with a twinkle in his eye which those who knew him must so well remember, he replied:

"I altered it a little—made it smarter."

"You can't think how proud I feel," said I, "and surprised, too; for from my knowledge of you, and from what I have heard from other people, you are about the last man to take advice about anything, least of all about the way of reading your own books."

"On the contrary," was the reply, "whenever I am wrong I am obliged to anyone who will tell me

of it; but up to the present I have never been wrong."

The portrait had progressed to the time when it was necessary to consider what the background should be, and I thought it best to discard the common curtain and column arrangement, and substitute for these well-worn properties the study in which the writer worked, with whatever accident of surrounding that might present itself. Accordingly I betook myself to Tavistock House, and was installed in a corner of the study from whence I had a view of Dickens as he sat writing under the window, his desk and papers, with a framed address to him—from Birmingham, I think—together with a bookcase, etc., making both back and fore ground. The first chapter of the "Tale of Two Cities," or rather a small portion of it, lay on the desk. After what appeared to me a vast deal of trouble on the part of the writer, muttering to himself, walking about the room, pulling his beard, and making dreadful faces, he still seemed to fail to satisfy himself with his work. I think he seldom if ever wrote after two o'clock; never, at least, when I was at Tavistock House. With Dickens's permission I used to read the early sheets of the new novel as they lay upon his desk. On one of the few occasions on which I got to work before him, I saw upon the table a paper parcel with a letter on the top of it. From the shape I guessed that it contained books, as the event proved. Presently Dickens came in, read the letter, and handed it to me, saying:

"Here you are again! This is the kind of thing I am subject to; people send me their books, and what is more, they require me to read them; and what is almost as bad, demand my opinion of them. Read that."

I obeyed, and read what appeared to me a very well-written appeal to the great master in the art, of which the writer was a very humble disciple, etc., begging for his perusal of the accompanying work, and his judgment upon it, and so on. The work was "Adam Bede," and the writer's name was George Eliot. Dickens took up one of the volumes, looked into it, and said: "Seems clever—a good style; suppose I must read it."

And read it he did that very day, for the next morning he said:

"That's a very good book, indeed, by George Eliot. But unless I am mistaken, G. Eliot is a woman."

It was about this time that Dickens bought the property at Gads Hill, near Rochester—the reputed locality of the famous Falstaff robbery—upon which his longing youthful eyes had been cast so many years before. My first visit to the new house—where Dickens and his family had gone for Christmas—was paid in December, 1858. The day was wet and dreary, but we passed it agreeably in talk and bagatelle; the players being Wilkie Collins and myself, with Dickens and Gordon—most genial of Scotchmen and Sheriff of Midlothian—for opponents.

When the portrait was finished Gordon came to see it. He walked into my painting-room with his

arm in a sling. Gordon had the national love of whisky, and my first thought was that gout had supervened, and I said as much.

"No," said Gordon; "a bite."

"And what has bitten you?"

"A lion," was the reply.

It appeared that on the occasion of a visit of Wombwell's Menagerie to Edinburgh, Gordon had chaperoned some ladies, and while talking to them he amused himself by rubbing the nose of a sleeping lion. The animal opened his mouth, to yawn, Gordon thought; and in shutting it, somehow or other Gordon's hand was enclosed, and the lion's teeth passed through it. The position was alarming enough, but Gordon's presence of mind was equal to the occasion. With his left hand he continued gently rubbing the still sleeping brute's nose. The lion yawned again, and the Sheriff withdrew his hand, but only just in time, for, to use Gordon's own words, "The beast's teeth had passed between the bones of the hand, completely through it, and he had begun in a sleepy way to move his jaws; and in another instant I should have been too late, for, as I removed my hand, he opened his eyes."

Dickens capped this experience with another instance of extraordinary stupidity. Being at the Zoological Gardens, he was startled by cries and shouting at the bears' den. A man was at the lower door of the den—now covered by a strong grating—screaming with pain and terror; he had offered one of the bears a bun, the bun was accepted, and the

man's fingers with it. As Dickens hurried towards the man, two keepers arrived at the same moment. The bear held the bun and fingers with an obstinacy quite immovable by the blows showered upon his nose. No time for hot irons, so after a very brief consultation the two strong keepers put their arms round the unfortunate man's waist and tore him away, leaving the bun and the first joints of his fingers in the possession of the bear.

When Dickens was sitting to me, he mentioned the intention of his publishers to issue a library edition of his works, with two steel illustrations to each volume. I begged him to allow me to be one of the illustrators; and I chose "Little Dorrit," from which I painted two small pictures, afterwards admirably engraved by Stocks, I think. The great pleasure that I felt in the anticipation of once more trying my hand in realizing the characters of the author was my sole motive in making this proposal. The pictures found purchasers immediately. Great was my delight, then, when I received the whole of the library edition with "To W. P. Frith, with the regard of the author," pasted into the first volume. Lovers of Dickens will understand with what care these books are treasured. I can only remember one unfavourable criticism of my portrait of Dickens, and that was by a lady who knew him well. She met me in the Exhibition, where she saw the likeness for the first time, and she greeted me with, "What has Dickens done to you that you should paint him like that?"

She deigned no explanation, and to this moment I don't know what she meant, except to be disagreeable, and in that she succeeded. However, I was amply compensated by the universal approval of all Dickens's family and friends—Stone, Egg. Leech, Mark Lemon, and Shirley Brooks, etc., etc.—who said, "At last we have the real man;" and best satisfied of all was John Forster. Forster was a gruff man with the kindest heart in the world, as the correspondence printed elsewhere goes far to prove; and I now take leave of him with heartfelt recognition of the generous praise that cheered me during my work, and of the noble liberality with which it was rewarded.

The portrait was admirably engraved by Mr. Barlow, R.A., and is now in the South Kensington Museum.

"Claude Duval" made slow but satisfactory progress. My diary for the last day of the year 1859 tells that I painted "Bit of distance right well. Branch of tree. Painted by gaslight. I am doing the most successful picture of its class that I have ever done—better in art than the 'Derby Day;' but it will not be so popular by a long way."

The prophecy conveyed in the above proved true. So great was the demand for modern art a quarter of a century ago, that copies of successful pictures—and sometimes of unsuccessful ones—were in great demand. I found myself included amongst the popular men to such a degree, that scarcely one of my more important works escaped what Scheffer

called being "bred from." Large and small *replicas* —to give them a fine name—were made; but in no instance without the consent of the owners of the original pictures. Mr. Price, of Queen Anne Street, possesses an important copy of "Claude Duval"—the original is now in the possession of Mr. Fielden, at Doburgh Castle, Todmorden. The critics were severe upon poor "Claude." I forget the words of their objurgations; but I remember the advice of one of them, which was that I should devote myself to the illustration of the "Newgate Calendar," with some compliments as to the fitness of my art and me for the office.

I think the only popular painter who kept himself free from the vice of copying was Edwin Landseer, with whom I had become intimate at this time. He was the greatest animal painter that ever lived; and his figures occasionally were scarcely inferior to his brutes. From his early youth he had been admitted to the highest society, and no wonder, for in addition to his genius, which was exercised again and again for the "great," either in ornamenting their scrap-books or in the more important form of pictures—for which he was very inadequately paid—he was the most delightful story-teller, and the most charming companion in the world. He also sang delightfully. In speaking, he had caught a little of the drawl affected in high life, and he practised it till it became a second nature. He was, of course, entirely free from envy of others; and conscious of his own shortcomings in his art, as a remark I once

heard him make will prove. "If people only knew as much about painting as I do," he said, "they would never buy my pictures."

His rapidity of execution was extraordinary. In the National Gallery there is a picture of two spaniels of what is erroneously called the Charles II. breed (the real dog of that time is of a different form and breed altogether, as may be seen in pictures of the period), the size of life, with appropriate accompaniments, in two days. An empty frame had been sent to the British Institution, where it was hung on the wall, waiting for its tenant—a picture of a lady with dogs—till Landseer felt the impossibility of finishing the picture satisfactorily. Time had passed, till two days only remained before the opening of the Exhibition. Something must be done; and in the time named those wonderfully lifelike little dogs were produced.

A still more extraordinary instance may be mentioned. Landseer was staying at Redleaf, the delightful seat of Mr. Wells, who, with all his love for artists, objected to their painting on Sunday. Landseer may have had an equal objection to going to church; anyway, he took advantage of Mr. Wells's absence on that laudable errand, to paint a picture of a dog—the size of life—with a rabbit in its mouth. This picture was begun as Mr. Wells started for his mile-and-a-quarter walk to church, and finished just as he returned, the whole time occupied being a little over two hours. On the trunk of a tree in the background is an inscription recording the feat.

The British Gallery was a favourite place of exhibition with Landseer, many of whose less important works were shown there. Amongst the rest I remember one of a hare attacked by a stoat; the stoat had caught the hare by the throat, and one could almost hear the screams of the poor creature in its hopeless resignation to its fate. I do not know who may be the happy owner of that splendid work, but if he should happen to read these lines and will then look at the back of his picture, he will find a criticism of the picture, which is unique, or nearly so, in the annals of that science. It is to the following effect:

"In Mr. Landseer's picture of a rabbit attacked by a weasel, it appears to us that the rabbit is more like a hare, and the weasel has none of the characteristics of that species of vermin, for it is more like a stoat."

The whole of the hall of Mr. Wells's residence was filled by the hand of Landseer—every variety of game, from the red-deer to the snipe, found its exponent in the great painter. When a pheasant was shot, its attitude was carefully preserved by bits of moss or pebbles, so that it might stiffen in death, and thus become a true model for the painter. When a partridge or a wild-duck fell, similar means were taken to secure results, of which most faithful transcripts filled the hall. Besides possessing pictures by nearly all the best modern painters, Mr. Wells had a very fine collection of old masters; and the gardens attached to the house were as remarkable as the contents of it. As the custodian of both,

Mr. Wells was even more difficult of approach by strangers than Mr. Sheepshanks. Living within easy distance of Tunbridge Wells, he found it necessary to arm himself against intruding excursionists, more especially after the railway was made. He told me he was called "Tiger Wells," he was thankful to say, and he should always show his claws to anybody who ventured too near his den. I was witness to one example of the tiger-nature which amused me, and may amuse my readers. A carriage filled with ladies, and attended by some gentlemen on horseback, was driven up to the Redleaf front-door. The chief occupant of the carriage was Lady ——, well known in London society. The gentlemen were all of the upper ten, most of them known only by sight to Mr. Wells. The door was opened by David, Mr. Wells's old servant; he was instructed to utter the usual formula, "Not at home," by Mr. Wells himself, who waited in the hall to see the result.

"Not at home," was announced to Lady —— by an aristocratic horseman.

"Never mind," said the lady. "Shall we see the gardens first, or would you like to take the pictures, and then the flowers?"

Before Lady —— could quite finish her directions Mr. Wells approached the carriage, and said, in a peremptory voice:

"Mr. Wells is not at home, madam!"

"Oh!" said the lady; "dear me! Then I suppose we must go back!"

Mr. Wells made his best bow, and the party departed.

To return to Landseer. Our intimacy had extended to the point of frequent dinner-meetings here and elsewhere. At this house he was always a welcome and honoured guest; but he had adopted a habit of keeping other guests waiting. It was usually at least half an hour after everybody else had arrived before he made his appearance. For any man to keep ladies waiting has always seemed to me a detestable practice, and though I had the greatest respect and love for Landseer, I determined to read him a lesson; so after suffering from these practices several times, I resolved never to wait a moment for him again. The consequence of this resolution was that the next dinner to which he had engaged himself to us was nearly half over when he walked into the dining-room, making profuse apologies for his "unavoidable" want of punctuality. Many and many a time did the delightful raconteur dine with us afterwards; he was always the first to arrive, and, with watch in hand, he would attack some tardy visitor—if he knew him well enough—and would say: "Look here, there is no rudeness equal to that of keeping ladies waiting for their dinners."

On one occasion our after-dinner talk turned upon the love of money, and as there were no very elderly people present, we all agreed that avarice was the vice of age; and some one spoke of the great Duke of Wellington, then living, as an example.

"No," said Landseer; "whoever says that knows nothing of the Duke. I know him well, and I say he is the very reverse of avaricious."

He then proceeded to give us an instance of his liberality. Landseer painted a picture of the lion-tamer, Van Amburgh; a large work representing the interior of a den of lions and tigers, amongst whom the man lay in apparent security. The artist was left with a free hand as to price; and when on the completion of the picture, in reply to the Duke's inquiry, Landseer told him the price would be six hundred guineas, the Duke wrote out a cheque for twelve. "I could tell you many more instances of his liberality," said the painter.

The great Duke, being human, was no doubt the victim of weaknesses, one of which—a very small one—consisted in the conviction that he could name every picture in the Apsley House collection without reference to the catalogue. So long as the pictures followed in regular sequence, and were named one after another in order, the effort of memory was successful; but if the narrator were called back, by the forgetfulness of the visitor, to any special picture, he was at fault; and without beginning again with the first picture in the room, he could not give the information asked for.

"I beg your pardon, sir; who did you say that was?" said Landseer to the Duke, on the occasion of a visit to Apsley House, at the same time pointing to a half-length portrait of a sour-looking woman in the costume of the time of Elizabeth.

The Duke looked up at the picture, muttered something, and left the room.

While the Duke was absent, Landseer studied other pictures, and had pretty well forgotten all about the sour-looking lady, when a voice close to his ear exclaimed, "Bloody Mary!"

The only true resemblance of the great Duke, in his later years, is in Landseer's picture of the "Visit to Waterloo," where the Duke is supposed to be describing to Lady Douro, his son's wife, an incident of the battle. It is the *vera effigies* of the man. I happened to be by when the Duke and Miss Burdett Coutts were looking at the picture in Trafalgar Square, and heard the great Captain say, looking at the portrait of Lady Douro: "That's quite shocking!" which it was indeed, as Landseer acknowledged; and, said he, "I wonder the Duke is any better, for he only sat half an hour."

It was interesting to see the great man looking at pictorial renderings of his exploits; they frequently figured on the Academy walls. Sir William Allan painted two, which appeared in the same Exhibition: one represented the Duke riding over the field of Waterloo by moonlight, when he is said to have "shed iron tears;" the other a frustrated attempt of some British sailors to escape from Boulogne. The Duke's habit was to examine every picture in the Exhibition that was visible to him; and I have seen him spend precisely the same time, and show the same interest—and no more—over pictures in which he figured gloriously, as he did in all others. If a

friend were with him, he would make a remark, as I heard him on Allan's picture of the "Waterloo Fight." "Too much smoke!" said the Duke.

Another celebrity whose remarks were striking enough, was Rogers the poet, who, on seeing a rather poor ill-drawn picture of Adam and Eve, exclaimed, "I deny that I am descended from that couple!"

It would be difficult to convey to the present generation any idea of the veneration that was felt for the great Duke. Everybody, down to the street boys, knew him, and vied with each other in offering marks of respect. I cannot refrain from describing an incident that came under my own observation. I was descending the steps that lead from the Duke of York's column into St. James's Park, when I saw the Duke on horseback, trotting slowly along, followed by his chocolate-coated groom, and attended by a dirty little boy who managed to keep pace with the Duke's horse, now and again looking up at the rider. The Duke's patience with his inquisitive follower failed as I descended the last step into the Park, for he stopped his horse and addressed the boy:

"What do you want?"

The boy put his hands into his pockets, was confused for a moment, and then looking up at the Duke said:

"I want to see where you are going."

"I am going there," said the Duke, pointing to the Horse Guards. "Now go about your business!"

The story told of Sydney Smith, who, on being asked by Landseer to sit to him, replied, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" is not true; but another and a better one, in which the young King of Portugal figured, may be relied upon, as I have Landseer's authority for its truthfulness. At one of the Court balls Landseer attended, and when the King of Portugal, who was also a guest, was made aware of the presence of the great animal painter, he expressed his desire for an introduction. Landseer was presented accordingly, when the King, in his imperfect English, said, "Oh, Mr. Landseer, I am delighted to make your acquaintance—I am so fond of *beasts!*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUCCESS OF "THE RAILWAY STATION."

THE autumn of 1860 was taken up by studies for the picture of "The Railway Station." The preparations were on much the same lines as those for the "Derby Day." Many chalk drawings of separate figures and groups, many changes of composition and incident, before I could satisfy myself that I might commence the inevitable oil-sketch. I don't think the station at Paddington can be called picturesque, nor can the clothes of the ordinary traveller be said to offer much attraction to the painter—in short, the difficulties of the subject were very great; and many were the warnings of my friends that I should only be courting failure if I persevered in trying to paint that which was in no sense pictorial. My own doubts were great, I confess, and I well remember my surprise—on showing the sketch to the great Flatow—at the eagerness with which he engaged himself to take the picture, sketch, and copyright, at a price that appeared to me then as one of the most exorbitant on record. As a matter of curiosity I append a copy of the agreement; by which it

will be seen that I had reserved the right to exhibit the picture at the Royal Academy—a right afterwards resigned for a consideration in the shape of seven hundred and fifty pounds:

"Memorandum of agreement made this tenth day of September, one thousand eight hundred and sixty, between William Powell Frith, R.A., of 10, Pembridge Villas, Bayswater, in the County of Middlesex, of the one part, and Louis Victor Flatow, of 23, Albany Street, Regent's Park, in the said County, picture-dealer, of the other part.

"The said William Powell Frith agrees to sell to the said Louis Victor Flatow, and said Louis Victor Flatow agrees to buy, the large picture now being painted by the said William Powell Frith, called 'A Railway Station,' together with the original sketch and the copyright thereof, for the sum of four thousand five hundred pounds, to be paid by instalments as follows: Five hundred pounds on the first day of December next ensuing; five hundred pounds on the first of March, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, and a like sum at the expiration of every succeeding three months, till the picture is completed, when the balance, if any, shall in any case be paid . . . .

"The said Louis Victor Flatow shall allow the picture to be exhibited at the Royal Academy in the Exhibition of the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, or in the following Exhibition.

"W. P. FRITH,
"L. V. FLATOW."

The above is all that is of interest in a somewhat lengthy document.

On August 28 I find the first entry of the commencement of the large picture of "The Railway Station:"

"Commenced picture of railway platform; another long journey, to which I go with almost as good a heart as I did to the 'Derby Day.' May it be as successful!"

I worked steadily on to the end of the year, and I closed my diary with:

"Once more in full swing at an important work, next in importance to the 'Derby Day,' which some say it will excel in merit and attractiveness. I am doubtful. The subject is good, but I don't feel so warm upon it as I did upon the other. Doubtful of myself. Damped by the indifference of my artist-friends. Let me remember that —— and —— treat what I have done so far with the greatest indifference, and see if the result justifies their opinion. If so, I am utterly deceived and conceited, and the blow that my confidence receives will be deserved. In the meantime let me do all I can to ensure success—work and wait."

The whole of the year 1861, with fewer interruptions than usual, was spent on "The Railway Station." My diary records incessant work, and the employment of a multitude of models. I fear there is little to tell that would interest my readers, but I desire to reiterate, for the information of young painters, that every object, living or dead, was

painted from nature—often imperfectly enough, as the picture proves. The police officers represented as arresting a criminal on the eve of escape, were painted from two detectives well known at that time, Messrs. Haydon and Brett, the latter of whom I believe still survives. They were admirable sitters, and when I complimented them on their patience they took small credit for doing for me what they had often done for criminals of a deeper dye, namely, standing on the watch, hour after hour, in the practice of their profession, waiting for a thief or a murderer.

One of the incidents in the picture represents a foreigner whose idea of a cab-fare differs considerably from that of the driver of the vehicle, and he is consequently subjected to a bullying not uncommon under similar circumstances. The original of the foreigner was a mysterious individual who taught my daughters Italian; he hailed from Venice, at that time groaning under Austrian rule. He was a man of distinguished manners; and we were given to understand that he was a nobleman whose head was wanted in Venice to serve a very different purpose from that to which I put it in this country. At first he refused to sit, as he dreaded recognition by some aristocratic friends who might come to England; and it was only on my promising that I would avoid making a likeness of him that I succeeded in overcoming his reluctance. If I am to keep to my determination to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in these reminiscences, I must here confess that I deceived the Italian count from the first; for,

unless I caught the character of the face, I knew my model would be useless to me. The difficulty then was to prevent the portrait being seen till it was finished: this was accomplished on one pretence or other; but the inevitable moment came at last, and never can I forget the torrent of broken English that was poured upon me when my sitter first saw his face in the picture. "You say it shall not be like me, and it is as if I see me in a look-glass. You have betray me — it is perfide — my friends will recognise me. If I thought it was to be so I would not have do it."

I fear my conduct was as indefensible as that of poor Haydon under somewhat similar circumstances; or only to be excused on the ground that in the cause of art the end justifies the means. As one of the principal actors in the Haydon case told me all the circumstances, I can vouch for their truth. The readers of Haydon's life are aware of his many arrests for debt and his consequent imprisonment in the King's Bench, where he was attracted by a boisterous travesty of an election performed by the prisoners, from whom he painted a picture called "The Mock Election," which was bought by George IV., and is now at Windsor Castle. Nearly all the models for the work were the actors in the burlesque, and ready to hand; he was at a loss, however, for one, the official who swears in the members; and reflection seems to have brought to his mind the father of his old friend and fellow-townsman Hart, R.A. (who told me the story), as being

exactly suited to his purpose. Haydon wrote to Hart, and, telling him what he wanted, begged him to allow his father to sit. Those who knew Mr. Hart will remember that he was not distinguished for personal beauty; but he was an Adonis in comparison with his father, whose physiognomy displayed the most unfavourable characteristics of the Jewish race. Mr. Hart, senior, lived with his son; who was an estimable person in all respects, and remarkable for his devotion to his father and his extreme sensitiveness in all that concerned him. It was not to be wondered at then that a very indignant refusal was sent in reply to Haydon's letter, together with vehement reproaches for his attempt to place the father of an old friend in so ridiculous and humiliating a position.

This brought a long and repentant letter from Haydon, which closed with a prayer for forgiveness; and the hope that a proof that animosity had ceased should be shown by the elder Hart being allowed to breakfast with the artist in prison, on the following Sunday morning.

With a heart overflowing with forgiveness on the part of both father and son, the former wended his way to breakfast in the King's Bench. Hart told me that his father had not been long gone before it occurred to him, knowing the old gentleman's kindly and somewhat weak character—and knowing, also, the character of Haydon—it would, perhaps, be as well if he were to go himself and see that the artist's well-known devotion to his art had not made him

forgetful of truth and honour. He argued with himself that such a betrayal was impossible, but in vain; and at last started for the prison, where he found Haydon at work, just finishing a wonderful likeness of the old man swearing in a dandy on a piece of burnt stick.

I take this opportunity of recommending a study of the life and death of poor Haydon—than whom a more enthusiastic, well-intending and mistaken being never existed—to the attention and study of students. I well remember the shock of his sad death, which distressed, if it scarcely surprised, all who knew him. Maclise first heard of it at the Athenæum Club, and seeing Turner reading a newspaper he went to him, and said:

"I have just heard of Haydon's suicide. Is it not awful?"

Turner, without looking up from his paper, said:

"Why did he stab his 'mother'?"

"Great heaven!" said Maclise, "you don't mean—"

"Yes. He stabbed his mother."

No explanation could be obtained from Turner, but he alluded no doubt to Haydon's attacks upon the Academy, to which he owed his education, and which were indeed the cause of his ruin.

The opportunity for a display of what Haydon called "high art" arrived at last by the proposed decoration of the Houses of Parliament with historical pictures—a consummation that he had been agitating for, in season and out of season, all his life—and then to see himself passed over, left out in the cold, whilst younger men took the prizes and gained all the

employment, was a most cruel blow; and one cannot read of it in Tom Taylor's admirable life of the artist without almost tearful sympathy. My friend the late John Thomas, the author of all the sculpture that decorates the exterior of the Houses, told me that on the day of the decision—so fatal to Haydon—he was lunching at a restaurant near the Houses of Parliament; when his attention was attracted to a man who, with a bottle of wine before him, was leaning on the table, the upper part of his face covered by his hand. As Thomas looked, thinking he knew the man, the tears fell slowly down the stranger's face. In a few minutes the hand was removed, and poor Haydon was revealed.

I must return to the "Railway Station," which was completed in March, 1862, after rather more than a year of incessant work. As I have said elsewhere, there were no exhibitions in those days except the annual ones, and no single-picture exhibitions at all. The "Railway" was a great success. I find that twenty-one thousand one hundred and fifty people paid for admission in seven weeks, and the subscription for the engraving was equally surprising and satisfactory. The critics contradicted one another as usual, without doing good or harm to me or the picture. Flatow was triumphant; coaxing, wheedling, and almost bullying, his unhappy visitors. Many of them, I verily believe, subscribed for the engraving to get rid of his importunity. He used to boast that he could induce the most unpromising visitor to subscribe; and on one occasion, as I was

talking to him in the outer room, a fashionable, languid-looking young gentleman, having seen the picture, was on the point of taking his umbrella and his departure. I whispered to Flatow:

"I will bet you half a crown you don't get that man to subscribe."

"Done with you!" said Flatow, and immediately went to the young visitor and, touching his hat, said: "I beg pardon, sir—have you seen a specimen of the manner in which this wonderful picture is about to be engraved?"

"N-no," drawled the dandy.

The umbrella was put back, and the visitor returned to the picture in the custody of Flatow. In a very few moments he came back in the act of buttoning his gloves; betrayer and victim exchanged farewell salutes, and the former, rejoining me, said:

"I will trouble you for two-and-sixpence!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES."

THE great success that had attended my modern-life subjects encouraged me to further effort in the same direction, and I forthwith arranged compositions for three pictures of London street scenes, to be called "Morning," "Noon," and "Night." The first represented the early dawn of a summer's morning, with a variety of incidents possible to the occasion: homeless wanderers, asleep and sleepless; burglars stopped by police red-handed; flower-girls returning from Covent Garden with their early purchases; belated young gentlemen whose condition sufficiently proved that the evening's amusement would not bear the morning's reflection; with other episodes more or less characteristic.

In "Noon," the *mise-en-scène* was Regent Street in full tide of active life. Ladies in carriages, costermongers in donkey-carts, dog-sellers, a blind beggar conducted across the street by his daughter and his dog, foreigners studying a map of bewildering London, etc., etc. The night scene was intended for the Haymarket by moonlight, the main incident

being the exit of the audience from the theatre; a party is about to enter a carriage, and a gentleman is placing a young lady's cloak closely about her shoulders, in tender lover-like fashion. This is being observed by an over-dressed and berouged woman, whose general aspect plainly proclaims her unhappy position; and by the expression of her faded though still handsome face, she feels a bitter pang at having lost forever all claim to manly care or pure affection.

How I should have delighted in trying to realize all that these subjects were capable of, no tongue can tell; but I will describe as briefly as possible how that, to me, most desirable consummation was prevented. I had the honour of being desired to paint a picture of the marriage of the Princess Royal and the Prince of Prussia. The "command" surprised me in the act of finishing the "Derby Day," and I was permitted to urge the claims of that work, and its owners, as an excuse for declining a task afterwards so ably performed by my friend Phillip; but when I was again summoned to a more formidable effort in the shape of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, I felt I must obey; though I was aware of the fearful difficulties that such a subject presented—scarcely exaggerated by what Landseer said to me when he heard of my temerity: "So you are going to do the marriage picture? Well! for all the money in this world, and all in the next, I wouldn't undertake such a thing." Not much appalled by this and other warnings, undertake it I did; and the street scenes,

for which I was to receive the incredible sum of ten thousand pounds from Mr. Gambart, a well-known and esteemed dealer of that time, were put on one side.

To satisfy those who might quite excusably refuse to believe in the folly of such an offer (it was an offer, for my impudence, great as it was, must not be credited with such an audacious *demand*), I append the agreement which legally bound painter and purchaser to the terms of the engagement :

> "Memorandum of agreement made this twenty-ninth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, between William Powell Frith, of No. 10, Pembridge Villas, Bayswater, in the County of Middlesex, Esquire, R.A., of the one part, and Ernest Gambart, of No. 120, Pall Mall, in the said County, Esquire, of the other part.

"The said William Powell Frith agrees to accept a commission to paint for the said Ernest Gambart, and the said Ernest Gambart agrees to give a commission to paint, three pictures by the said William Powell Frith, and to be called 'The Streets of London' (such pictures to consist of three parts as hereafter mentioned); and the said William Powell Frith agrees to sell the copyright therein, together with the original sketches thereof, and all further sketches or drawings made or to be made in furtherance of the said pictures, for the sum of ten thousand pounds, to be paid by instalments as follows, namely :

Five hundred pounds on the signing of this agreement; five hundred pounds at the expiration of three calendar months from the commencement of the said pictures, and a like sum of five hundred pounds at the expiration of every succeeding three calendar months until the whole of the said sum of ten thousand pounds shall be paid, or until the said pictures shall be completed; in case the same shall be completed before, the said sum of ten thousand pounds shall be fully paid, in which case the balance which shall be then unpaid shall immediately, upon such completion and delivery of the said paintings and sketches, be paid.

(Signed) "W. P. FRITH,
"ERNEST GAMBART.'

With the final clauses of the agreement—being solely legal technicalities—it is unnecessary to trouble the reader.

I again quote from my diary:

"*Sunday, Jan.* 13, '68.—In the evening a letter from Eastlake, to say the Queen wished me to paint the marriage of the Prince of Wales."

"*Jan.* 18.—Gambart called, and agreed to the postponement of the street pictures in consequence of the Queen's wish that I should paint the marriage of the Prince of Wales."

"*Jan.* 29.—Sir C. Phipps writes to say the Queen agrees to my terms for the marriage of the Prince of Wales—three thousand pounds."

"*March* 10.—Sees me in a Court suit, sword, etc.,

at the marriage of the Prince of Wales; a glorious subject for pageantry and colour. I like the subject, and think I can make a great deal of it."

This marriage ceremony, though somewhat longer than the usual one, was all too short for sketching possibilities. The whole scene must be remembered; and, beyond notes of the positions of the various personages in the chapel, which I entered in my sketch-book, I made no use of it. The ceremony left such a vivid impression upon my mind that I found no difficulty in preparing a tolerable sketch of the general effect; and in due course I was permitted to submit my attempt to the Queen. On Tuesday, the 7th of April, I find my diary says: "To Windsor to see the Queen, who spent more than half an hour with me. Seemed to be much pleased with the sketch, and was most agreeable; consented to all I proposed. The picture to be ten feet long. All charming so far."

"So far and no farther," for all too soon did my troubles begin. Letters had to be written by the score; answers came sometimes, and sometimes silence was the answer. In my applications for sittings and dresses I had forgotten to say that the picture was painted for, and by command of, the Queen; when that announcement was added, consent in most cases came readily enough. All the bridesmaids but one promised to give me every advantage. From one lady I received no reply; but in place of it a visit from her mother, whom I found in a bewildered condition in my drawing-room. As

I entered, the lady—who was looking with a puzzled expression at the different ornaments in the room—turned to me and said:

"I think I have made a mistake; it is the artist Frith I wish to see."

"Yes," said I, "I am that individual."

"Oh, really! and this is your—this is where you live?"

"Yes," replied I, "this is where I live;" then mentally, "and not in the garret where you had evidently been taught that most artists reside; and as I have a coal-cellar I am not forced to keep my fuel in a corner of the garret, and I am not always dining on the traditional red herring."

"Oh, then I have called in reply to a letter from you, asking my daughter, Lady ——, who was one of the Princess's bridesmaids, to sit for a picture, to tell you it is impossible for her to sit; and as to her dress, which you ask for, she cannot spare it."

"Indeed," I replied, "I am sorry to hear this; however, I will represent what you tell me to the Queen, and I dare say I shall be allowed to substitute one of my models, who must play the part of bridesmaid instead of Lady ——."

My visitor looked at me with an expression which, being interpreted, said as plainly as words, "What does this man mean with his Queen, and his model, and his independent impertinent manner?" After a pause she said:

"Why are you painting this picture? What is it for? Can I see it?"

"If you will walk this way," pointing to my painting-room, "I shall be happy to show it to you."

"What a queer place! Why do you shut up part of your window? Oh, that is the picture! Well, what is it done for?"

"It is done for the Queen."

"Done for the Queen? Who presents it to the Queen?"

"Nobody—the Queen presents it to herself; at any rate, she pays for it."

"Really?"

"Yes, really." Then in my most respectful manner I added, "I am well aware how much young ladies are engaged, and how disagreeable it must be for them to waste time in sitting to artists when it can be so much more usefully occupied; so if you will allow me, I will tell her Majesty, through Lady Augusta Bruce, that your daughter is unable," etc.

After another pause, and in a somewhat petulant tone, the lady said:

"Really, I think the Queen, when she asks ladies to be bridesmaids, should tell them that they may be called upon to go through the sort of penance you propose to inflict upon my daughter."

"I thought I had made it clear that I should prefer to use one of my models than that your daughter should be annoyed; and if you find she cannot consent I will write to Lady Augusta Bruce," etc.

"Well, good-morning. I will let you know; I will see what my daughter says."

The young lady came, and was one of the most agreeable of my sitters. Though I lost not a moment in impressing on all who were present at the wedding that I must have their dresses to paint from, I was told by several that the gowns were already taken to pieces (to one of which I was welcome), given away, or cut up into mementos of the interesting event, etc. In reply, I threatened them with the Queen if the dresses were not produced; and, strange to say, the destroyed ones became miraculously whole again and were sent to me. So far I was successful with the English, but with the foreigners I was beaten now and then. The Duchess of Brabant, now Queen of the Belgians, wore a magnificent robe of moiré antique of a lovely purple colour. She was a very handsome woman in a prominent position in the foreground; in fact, in what we call the very "eye of the picture." Those days were days of crinoline, and the space taken up in the picture was great; and great was my distress when I was told that the Duchess had already departed, and the robes had vanished also. Those who knew Lady Augusta Bruce (afterwards wife of the Dean of Westminster) do not require to be told that she was one of the most delightful women that ever lived; her kindness to me in all my troubles I can never forget. We grieved together over the absent Duchess's dress, and Lady Augusta said:

"We are going to Cobourg, and I will try to manage it."

In a letter written to my sister, dated August 23, 1863, I find the following:

"I have had a long letter from Lady Augusta from Cobourg. She has succeeded in getting me the Duchess of Brabant's robes, but not without the Queen herself having to intercede for them, and I am to pledge myself neither to *smoke* nor *drink beer* in their presence."

I kept my word with some difficulty as regards smoking, easily in respect of beer; but why these restrictions? On Lady Augusta's return the mystery was solved. The Duchess had lent dresses to Belgian painters, who had returned them not only smelling of tobacco, but beer-stained also.

The Danish Princes and Princesses baffled me completely. They had no time in the short space allowed them in England to sit to be painted—scarcely for their photographs. I had therefore to trust to that most unsatisfactory process for my likenesses of them, which are consequently the worst in all respects in the whole picture; and if I had not had a friend at the Court of Denmark I should have been left lamenting for the dresses, orders, helmets, etc., of the male personages. With regard to the ladies, not the slightest help was afforded me. The present Queen of Denmark and the Princess Dagmar, now Empress of Russia, were painted from photographs, and the Duchess of Brabant from description only. The King of Greece never sat at all; but a very charming young man, Prince Frederick—an elder brother of the Grecian King, and a student at

Oxford or Cambridge—came to Windsor on a visit to the Queen and the Crown Prince of Prussia (then staying at the Castle), and gave me a sitting; the Crown Prince staying with us the while to amuse the young gentleman, which he seemed to do most effectually, for the two never ceased talking—in a language that I did not understand—for an hour and a half at least. When the sitting was over, a difficulty took place at the door of the Rubens room—my temporary studio—as to which of the two young men should take precedence; there they stood, each refusing to go first, till at last the Crown Prince of Prussia cut the knot by backing through the doorway, the Dane following face to face.

The Danish Prince left immediately for his college; and when he next found himself face to face with the Prince of Prussia, it was on one of the battle-fields in Schleswig-Holstein.

When the Crown Princess was sitting for me, she endeavoured to make me understand the Schleswig-Holstein difficulty. She talked most admirably, and no doubt would have succeeded in enlightening an ordinary understanding; but the difficulty becomes great when the listener is also occupied in a painful endeavour to catch a likeness. Anyway, I could not understand the *pro* and *con* of the dispute between the Powers.

One of the most picturesque and conspicuous figures at the marriage was the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh. He wore the Eastern dress and was covered with jewels—I was about to say blazed with them—

but the diamonds, being uncut, looked to me like bits of dull glass, with just as much glitter. They had to be painted, however, and the Prince was willing to wear them; but, as they were of fabulous value, he was naturally reluctant to leave them with me; and he was only induced to do so on the condition that his servant remained with them, and with the understanding that they were to be deposited each night at Coutts's Bank. This the servant promised; but, seeing that I possessed a burglar-proof iron safe, he trusted them to its keeping, and me with the keys, remarking: "Now, if the Prince knew of this, he would be awake all night."

My diary again records day after day of incessant work. I must quote from it, and largely also from letters written to my sister at the time. The bridesmaids were kindness itself; and if any representation of them fails in likeness or otherwise, the fault is not theirs. My regard for truth compels me to say they were not all beautiful, but one left little to be desired in that respect. Lady Diana Beauclerk, daughter of the Duke of St. Albans, was not only beautiful, but as agreeable as she was handsome.

On the 20th May my diary says: "At 12 came the Duchess of St. Albans and her daughter, the Lady Diana Beauclerk—a most sweet creature—who sat divinely for nearly three hours. I made a lovely beginning. Later in the day came S. Oxon, who stayed twenty minutes to no purpose."

I must say, however, for the Bishop, that, on the whole, he was a very satisfactory sitter—giving me

every opportunity, of which I availed myself to good purpose. I cannot refrain from recording an incident in connection with the Bishop's likeness.

The Lord Chancellor Westbury and the Bishop came to loggerheads in the House of Lords. Westbury spoke of the "saponaceous prelate," and used other disrespectful expressions in a discussion on some forgotten subject. The Bishop, in reply, begged the learned lord, if he had no respect for himself, to respect the assembly in which he, perhaps unexpectedly—the Bishop would not say undeservedly—found himself.

When the Lord Chancellor sat for me, his eye caught the form of the Bishop of Oxford, and he said: "Ah! Sam of Oxford. I should have thought it impossible to produce a tolerably agreeable face, and yet preserve any resemblance to the Bishop of Oxford." And when the Bishop saw my portrait of Westbury, he said: "Like him? yes; but not wicked enough."

The Speaker of the House of Commons, Denison, afterwards Lord Ossington, told me the following anecdote of Lord Westbury:

"Lord Ebury had brought into the House of Lords a Bill with the object of effecting certain changes in the Burial Service; several animated discussions had taken place, just at the time that some unpleasant disclosures were revealed in which Lord Westbury was implicated, and which led to his resignation of the Chancellorship. The noble lord announced his resignation in a speech which his

friends said was pathetic enough to melt the hearts of his hearers; but which his enemies said was a masterpiece of affected repentance and hypocritical mockery. The House was greatly moved, and as the Lord Chancellor was leaving it, he met Lord Ebury, and said to him: 'My lord, you can now read the Burial Service over me, with any alteration you think proper.'"

My mention of the Speaker reminds me of his being the possessor of a study of the Princess of Wales, which I sold to him after using it for the larger picture. I don't know the exact age of the Princess at the time of her marriage, and should be careful to keep it to myself if I did; but she was very young and very beautiful, as all the world knows. She very graciously consented to come to my house, and to afford me every assistance in the way of sittings for my picture.

The Princess is well known for her kindness of heart. Ah! how that heart would have ached if its owner had realized the aching of mine, when I, too soon, discovered that the illustrious young lady did not know that the keeping her face in one position, for a few minutes even, was necessary to enable an artist to catch a resemblance of it. That first sitting can I ever forget? I did not dare to complain till after two or three more fruitless attempts. With downright failure staring me in the face, I opened my heart to the Prince of Wales. "You should scold her," said the Prince.

Just at this time the Princess was sitting for her

bust to the celebrated sculptor Gibson, R.A., in a room at Marlborough House. I was sent for by the Prince, and, before I was admitted to an interview, I was shown into the sculptor's studio, and found him waiting for a sitting from the Princess. The bust was already in an advanced stage. I did not think it was very like, and, in reply to Gibson, said so. "Well, you see," said Gibson, "the Princess is a delightful lady, but she can't sit a bit."

Just at this moment I was summoned to the Prince, whom I found with the Princess; and I saw, or thought I saw, a sort of pretty smiling pout, eloquent of reproof, and of half-anger with me. The Prince had something to show me—photographs, I think—and then he led the way to Gibson; the Princess and I following.

No sooner did we find ourselves in the sculptor's presence, than—after some remarks upon the bust—the Prince said: "How do *you* find the Princess sit, Mr. Gibson?" "Now," thought I, "if ever man was in an awkward fix, you are, Mr. Gibson; for, after what you said to me a few minutes ago, you cannot, in my presence, compliment the beautiful model on her sitting."

The Prince looked at Gibson, and Gibson looked in dead silence at the Prince, and then at the Princess; he then looked again at the Prince, smiled and shook his head.

"There, you see, you neither sit properly to Mr. Gibson nor to Mr. Frith."

"I do—I do," said the lady. "You are two bad men!"

And then we all smiled; and Gibson went on with his work, the Princess sitting admirably for the short time that I remained.

This was a good omen, as I afterwards found; for the Princess sat most kindly and steadily for me at Windsor; and I quite believe that the seemingly naughty behaviour during the first sittings arose from her ignorance of the necessity for a fair amount of carefulness in keeping the position required.

The Prince's sittings, and unvarying considerate kindness, left nothing to be desired. The same must be said of all the Princesses; and to enforce this, I may quote from a letter written at the time to my sister.

"Windsor, Nov. 8, 1863.

"Here we are cheek by jowl (rather a vulgar expression that) with royalty, and if painting were not so difficult, it would be very delightful indeed; for nothing can exceed the kindness of everybody with whom I come in contact. And how the stories have arisen about artists' time being wasted, I can't think; for with me the royalties come to their time, and sit admirably, save that the sittings are shorter than I like. The Queen sits to-morrow from one till two. I have tried hard to get her to sit for an hour and a half; but she says she cannot spare the time *at once*, and would rather sit any number of times an hour at a time. The Queen is most kind; but I can tell you more about all concerned to-morrow. As to the Princesses, they

would be considered most charming girls anywhere; none of their photographs do them justice. The difficulty is to keep in mind in whose presence you are —they laugh and talk so familiarly, and still sit well. Princess Beatrice, too, is a most sweet little creature, and as I took Princess Helena's advice, and *over-awed* her a little, she sat right well; but she began to take liberties at last, and I am afraid next time I shall be troubled to keep her quiet. As to Prince William of Prussia, of all the little Turks he is one of the worst; and how I am to get a likeness of him I don't know. I let him paint a little on the picture, which delighted him. At the same time I was painting Princess Beatrice's dress from the lay figure, when the door of the Rubens room (where I am at work) was thrown open, and a man shouted, as if he was proposing a toast at a public dinner, 'The Crown Prince of Prussia and the Royal Family.' And in marched the Crown Prince (who had arrived at the Castle unexpectedly) with his three children, their nurses, and all the English Princesses and their attendants. Fortunately the room is an immense one, or it would have been filled; and of all the rows!—those children, shouting, laughing, and romping with the Princesses. I was looking at little Prince William, and talking to Princess Helena, when the royal imp looked up in my face and said: 'Mr. Fiff, you are a nice man; but your whiskers——' when the Princess stopped his mouth with her hand. He struggled to get her hand away, and again said— 'Your whiskers——' when she stopped him again,

blushing, and laughing till she could scarcely move. However, they carried the youngster to the other end of the room, and soon brought him back to good manners. The Crown Prince—who is one of the finest and most manly-looking figures I ever saw—sat for a while, and I did the outline of his head, and shall make a very successful thing of him. The Crown Princess comes on Tuesday, when I hope to get a nice likeness of her. . . . Little Prince William calls the picture 'Uncle Wales' Wedding.' The Princesses always speak of the Queen as 'Mamma,' and they are altogether like a happy middle-class family. And now I think I have told you enough till next time.

"I am, as ever,

"Your affectionate Brother."

The whisker mystery was never revealed, but I inflicted a very unintentional and regretted punishment on the little boy, which I fancy he may remember to this day. The picture of the marriage was ten feet long, and, as I said above, I portioned off one of the lower corners of it—about a foot square—which I lent to the young Prince (he was about seven years old, I think) to paint a picture upon—giving him paints and brushes, but telling him to keep strictly within the boundaries of his own property. I was working quietly at my part of the picture when I was roused by an exclamation of alarm from the lady in whose charge the Prince always came to me, who cried :

"Look at his face! What has he been doing to it?"

Well, he had simply been wiping his brushes upon it, for it was streaked with vermilion, bright blue, and other pigments.

"What is to be done? If the Princess should see him she would——".

"Oh," said I, "I can easily remove the paint."

And so saying I dipped some clean rag into turpentine and effectually rubbed off the colour, or, to be correct, I was rapidly removing it, when I was stopped by violent screams from the young gentleman, accompanied by a severe cuff from his little fist. The turpentine had found out a little spot or scratch on his face, and no doubt gave him great pain—great indeed if one might take scream after scream as a proof. He tore away from me, after a parting kick, and took refuge under a large table and yelled till he was tired, his governess the while in terror that he might be heard.

I don't think he forgot or forgave my "remedial efforts," for he took much pleasure after in tormenting me by sitting so badly that I failed in producing anything in the picture resembling him. This young gentleman is now married and is a father, and I trust a happy one.

It was a matter of regret to me that I was deprived, by the lamented death of the Prince Consort, of a critic whose remarks would have been of great use to me. Of all the Princesses, I think the Crown Princess showed the greatest knowledge of the prin-

ciples of art. The Queen, being herself an artist of experience and ability, more than once assisted me by suggestions. Amongst the many sitters who came to me was one who much interested me—the Honourable Something Byng, called "Poodle" Byng—a man of fashion about town in the early part of this century, a contemporary and friend of Brummel, about whom he had many stories. Mr. Byng was a very old gentleman when he assisted at the wedding of the Prince of Wales, as is abundantly proved by the fact of his having been at the marriage of George IV., who, when Prince of Wales, was united to Caroline of Brunswick in 1795. Mr. Byng, then a boy of sixteen, perfectly remembered the whole scene, and as perfectly described it to me.

"Those were drinking-days," said the old gentleman, "and the Prince never spared the bottle. The company had been some time assembled at St. James's Palace, waiting for the Prince, without whom, you know, the ceremony could not take place, the King and Queen sitting in great impatience; the King now and again tapping the floor with his foot, then saying something in an angry tone to the Queen. At last in came the Prince, attended by some gentlemen—I forget who they were—his face flushed, you know, and a little uncertain on his legs. The King looked very black at him, I can tell you. However, he got through very well. The Princess was very nervous."

"Was she pretty?" asked I.

"Well, no—fresh, healthy-looking woman, though

—but about as opposite to this Princess as George IV. was to our Prince."

At the time Mr. Byng sat to me he was considerably over eighty. He lived in Duke Street, St. James's, and always walked to and from Bayswater; and boasted of the feat, in which he was justified, I think.

I remember with peculiar pleasure my short acquaintance with the Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Mary. Both those ladies sat delightfully, and I think I succeeded in producing fair likenesses of them.

Sir Edward Cust—a distinguished authority on matters of warfare—was Master of Ceremonies to the Court, and took his place in St. George's Chapel as a matter of right. He sat to me many times, and on one occasion, in the latter part of a summer's day, when I was much fatigued by my day's work, I said:

"I feel a little tired, Sir Edward; would you mind my smoking a cigar?'

"Not in the least," replied Sir Edward, "if you don't mind my being sick, which I certainly shall be the moment you begin."

The Maharajah Dhuleep Singh had a face of a handsome type, but somewhat expressionless. It seemed strange to me to find myself painting from one who was born ruler of a bigger country than England, who had been dragged across the sea, jewels and all, to assist at the wedding of a barbarian on a little Western island, and—what he may have con-

sidered an additional punishment—he was made to sit for his likeness, and compelled to lend his treasured jewels to be copied by an infidel whose neck it might have been his delight to wring if it had been in his power. He is a thoroughly good young man, his servant told me: "he reads no book but the Bible, which he knows from cover to cover." He told me he used to be decorated with the Koh-i-Noor when a boy, and he was very pleased that the Queen was now the possessor of that remarkable jewel.

I think it must be admitted that as sitters for their pictures, the men bear away the palm from the ladies. There are exceptions, of course, on both sides, but, so far as my experience goes, I have found the male more patient than the female; the result being—notably in the picture in question—a superiority of likeness in all the men. The Prince of Saxe-Weimar, the Prince of Leiningen, the Crown Prince, and many others, were model sitters, patient, good-natured, and tolerant—perhaps indifferent—of the, sometimes, unflattering result of their patience. Not so some of the ladies. One—the aged wife of an ambassador—was so shocked by my portrait of her that she implored me to rub it out. She spoke imperfect English, and she said, "Oh, mister, that is not me. I cannot have grow like that. I will give you my likeness to copy;" and she sent me a drawing done from her when she was a lovely girl of eighteen, with an urgent request that I would correct my libel of her immediately. I declined; and the figure remains a by no means unflattered copy of a very plain old lady.

The Bishops were, one and all, delightful. Longley, Archbishop of Canterbury, who in his early days was head-master of Harrow, sat many times, and amused me by anecdotes. On one occasion, he told me, as he was passing one of the houses at Harrow occupied by students, he saw a rope dangling from one of the windows. He seized the rope, and instantly found it pulled so vigorously from the other end, that his feet were off the ground, and he was hanging in the air and drawn slowly up to the window before he had time to think of the danger of his position. Most fortunately the window was not far from the ground, for no sooner had the head and shoulders of the master appeared before the astonished and dismayed eyes of the students—who expected a very different apparition—than they let go the cord, and the future archbishop lay sprawling on the ground. "The young rascals," said the Archbishop, "had sent one of their companions into the town for something or other, and that was the way he was to rejoin them." The Archbishop, as Primate, was the officiating clergyman at the Prince's marriage, being assisted by the Bishops of London, Winchester, Chester, and Oxford, the latter in his robes as Prelate of the Order of the Garter.

Sumner, Bishop of Winchester, was a very old man, nearer eighty than seventy; he seemed so hale and active that I was induced to ask him if he had adopted any special regimen as regards diet, exercise, etc. "Well," said he, "I have eaten of whatever good things were put before me, and I have drunk

a bottle of port wine every day since I was a boy. The only precaution I have taken has been in the quality of the wine; for unless it was old and good, I would have none of it."

The Bishop of Chester came to London on purpose to sit for me. I only troubled him twice, and he sat so patiently that his portrait is one of the most like of all. He had a very characteristic face and a very long neck. The Bishop of Oxford told me the Bishops called him their "Neck-or-nothing brother."

A certain Marquis, now dead, had the character, —rightly or wrongly ascribed to him—of being parsimonious to an extent often verging on absolute meanness. In conversation with the Bishop of London, the miserly disposition of this nobleman was discussed; when the Bishop said: "I have heard these stories, and must believe some of them; nor do I think them irreconcilable with a lavish generosity in directions where help is required for deserving objects, as a cheque for ten thousand pounds for 'The Curates' Augmentation Fund'—which I have at this moment in my pocket signed by the very nobleman in question—proves."

To the many applications made by me to the various personages who were present at the marriage of the Prince of Wales I received but one refusal to sit. All the stalls in St. George's Chapel were filled by Knights of the Garter in their robes; and amongst them was a noble Duke celebrated for being the possessor of a very broad-brimmed hat and a very ordinary—not to say ugly—face. My first appeal

failed in eliciting a reply, but to my second letter I received the following answer:

"DEAR SIR,

"I have no time to sit for a picture. If my form must appear in your work, allow me to suggest that, in respect of my face, you might bury it in my hat, in the manner of people when they go to church.

"Your obedient Servant,

"——— ———"

Some of the figures in the distance were so small that I refrained from troubling the originals, finding good photographs sufficient guides. Amongst these was Mr. Disraeli, whose face on the canvas was certainly not larger than a shilling; and I told Mrs. Disraeli, when she called to see the picture, that I could not think of troubling her husband, and on some excuse or other I escaped showing it to her; as I knew she would be distressed at finding the great man playing so small a part in it. The worship of that estimable lady for her husband is well known, and I may relate here an instance of it.

My old friend John Phillip, R.A., was commissioned by the Speaker Denison to paint a picture of a portion of the House of Commons. The work was to contain portraits of some of the most eminent members of the Government and of the Opposition. On one side are Lord Palmerston, who is speaking, Cornewall Lewis, Lord John Russell, Lord Lytton, etc., and opposite sit Disraeli and those of his

inclining. Phillip told me that, after the first sitting from Disraeli—the colours being necessarily somewhat crude — the lady and gentleman took their departure; but, after seeing her husband into the carriage, Mrs. Disraeli returned to the studio, and, walking quickly up to the painter, said, "Remember his pallor is his beauty!" and, without another word, rejoined her husband.

Here I make further quotations from my letters to my sister. I find in November, 1863, I write:

"I must confess that if there be any shortcomings in the picture I don't think I can fairly attribute them to the Royal people, for nothing could be kinder than they have been; and I quite believe that the short sittings, in the present state of things, are unavoidable.

"Princess Louise told me the other day that she and Princess Helena were at the Great Exhibition, and Princess Helena, feeling some one tugging at her dress, turned round, and heard a woman exclaim, 'I've touched her, I've touched her! Oh, it's a noble family!'"

"Now, without the least flunkey feeling (and I don't think anybody would accuse me of such a weakness), I don't think I ever was more surprised than I have been with the Royal children: the most unaffected, genial, pleasant creatures, without the least pride of place about them.

"The Queen will sit again in a few days, and that will be the last opportunity I shall have till the spring —perhaps the last, as I have been very successful

with her Majesty, although my sittings have been so short. . . . . Scarcely a day passes without, some one who is staying in the Castle coming into my work-room: the other day Lord Carlisle and some interesting people, amongst whom was the Duke de Nemours, whose face I shall never forget — he looked history. I thought I could find traces of Henry IV., the Guises, the Bourbons—a kind of exemplar of the French royal blood. It was most curious—not fanciful on my part. And his manners had a sort of old-world dignity and gentle formality that was inexpressibly striking; it was like talking with the dead—and if he had been dressed in the high boots and armour of Henry IV., the very man would have been before you. When he had gone, and I looked round at the stately Rubens in their high ruffs and peaked beards, I could scarcely believe I had not been talking to one of them. I assure you I am not exaggerating—it was most striking; and so are others who come, only they waste my time.

"Ever your affectionate Brother."

Another anecdote related to me by one of the Princesses—I forget which—is worth recording. After the marriage of the Crown Prince of Prussia with the Princess Royal of England, the happy pair embarked at Gravesend for their future home. To reach their vessel they had to pass through a dense mass of people by means of a long passage, or gangway, closely beset on both sides by all sorts and conditions of men and women. As the Royal couple

walked slowly along, the Prince felt his arm touched; he turned, and was thus addressed by a navvy: "Now mind you behave well to her when you gets her over there; if you don't, we'll pretty soon fetch her back again."

In another letter of a later date:

"London, December 20.

"MY DEAREST J——,

"I confess I am right glad to find myself at home again, after the pains and troubles of Windsor; not that I have anything to complain of, as I said before, but that the difficulties have been so great. . . . When I tell you that in less than seven weeks I have finished the Queen and the Prince, nearly done the three English Princesses, advanced the Crown Princess and her son almost to completion, quite done the Crown Prince, begun General Grey, Lady Mount-Edgecumbe, the Lord Chamberlain, and some others, and made a most satisfactory study of the Princess of Wales, you will admit I have made the most of my time. The Queen came to see me just before she left, and all the Princesses came to say good-bye. Little Princess Beatrice was most affectionate. She shook hands with me three times. She showed me the present she had prepared for Lady Augusta Bruce—who is to marry Dean Stanley almost immediately — a little ring made of forget-me-nots in diamonds, of which she was very proud. I believe the likeness I have done of the Queen is satisfactory, only too faithful, I

thought — not in the least flattered. I said as much to Princess Helena, and her reply was very characteristic. I said I thought the public would scarcely be satisfied, after the pretty-looking things they had been accustomed to. The Princess said: 'The public—well, you may say to the public that mamma's children are delighted with it, and beg you never to touch it again; *we* think it perfect. . . .'

"Ever your affectionate Brother."

I think it was at Windsor that I heard a story of the Royal children, or rather of one of them, that I may relate, though I cannot vouch for the truth of it:

"Some years before the marriage of the Prince of Wales, the present Lord ——, who suffers from a lame foot, was invited to Osborne. Previous to his arrival, a discussion took place between the Queen and the Prince Consort as to the advisability of drawing the children's attention to the nobleman's lameness, and at the same time warning them to take no notice of it, or whether it would be better, having regard to the thoughtlessness of children, to say nothing at all about it. After much consideration, the latter idea was adopted. Lord —— came, played with the young royalties, and left very early one morning. When the children came to breakfast, they looked for Lord ——, and one of them asked for him. The Queen said, 'Lord —— has gone.'

"'There, now!' said one of the Princes, whimper-

ing, 'that is too bad. He has gone, and he promised to show me his foot.'"

Before I take my leave of Windsor, I have to tell how I happened to see part of the body of Charles I.

One day, when I was sketching in St. George's Chapel, an elderly man—a verger, I think—came to me, and asked if I should like to see "a little bit of Charles I." The man seemed to be in his right mind; he was one of the officials that I had frequently seen in the Chapel—well dressed, a gold chain with a locket attached to it—a watch no doubt at the end—in evidence on his waistcoat.

"I really don't know what you mean by a bit of Charles I.," said I. "How could I see such a thing?"

The locket was opened, and a small dark object shown to me.

"That," said the man, "is a portion of the body of Charles I."

"And how did you become possessed of it?" asked I.

"Well, sir, it was in this way: When George IV. was Prince Regent, I was a carpenter's boy doing odd jobs with my master about the Castle, and we was ordered into the vaults just below where you are standing. There was the Prince and some gentlemen, and one of the Castle servants with a light; and they was evidently looking about for something, and they were some time before they found what they wanted. At last, one of the gents—he was a doctor,

I think—says, 'Here it is!' pointing to one of the coffins. He took the light and held it close, and you could read, 'King Charles, 1648'—I think that was the date, or something near it. Then the Prince says to my master, 'Open the coffin, and be very careful how you do it;' and him and me did it, and we raised the lid, and there was a startler, I assure you! You know them pictures of King Charles in the Castle? well, sir, they *are* good likenesses, I can tell you: for there he was—the beard on the chin and the moustaches, just as he is drawn. One eye was wide open, but the other was gone; his face was just like life, only very brown; and round the throat there was a piece of black ribbon. 'Now take out the head,' said the Prince, and my master took hold of it, but he seemed frightened, for his hands shook, and, just as the Prince said, 'Look! the eye is going' (and so it was, for it turned to dust as we was looking), master's hand shook so that the head slipped through his fingers on to the ground—he said it had become so greasy he couldn't hold it. The Prince was angry, and blew master up, and told one of the gentlemen to put it back in the coffin—which was done—and then they all went away, leaving us to close up the coffin. We was tidying up, when master said, 'Why, here is a bit of him!' and he picked up from the floor, where the head had fallen, a piece of flesh from the neck, and gave it to me for a keepsake. So I kept it ever since; and you may take your oath wherever you like that you have seen a part of the body of Charles I."

When the marriage picture was finished, I was honoured by a visit from the Queen at my house in Pembridge Villas. Her Majesty showed me the kindness she displays to all artists, and, though I was conscious of the many shortcomings of the picture, and quite aware that they could not escape her eyes, she found little or no fault, and left me under the impression that I had succeeded as well as could be expected, considering the great difficulties of the task.

The picture went to the Exhibition of 1865, and, from the nature of the subject, was very attractive. After trying the policeman, who failed to keep the crowd at a proper distance from the picture, an iron rail was again found necessary, and—after a fight—adopted.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GREAT ACTORS OF MY YOUTH.

In reading Evelyn's delightful "Diary" I had been struck by a description of a scene at the old Palace at Whitehall—then occupied by Charles II. and his Court—where debauchery of all kinds, and gambling in particular, were pretty generally practised. Evelyn describes a visit of himself and two friends to the Palace, on the Sunday evening preceding the death of the King, in the following words:

"I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming, and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening) which this day se'nnight I was witness of. The King sitting and toying with his concubines—Cleveland, Portsmouth, and Mazarin; a French boy singing love-songs in that glorious gallery; whilst about twenty of the greater courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset round a large table—a bank of at least two thousand pounds in gold before them—upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust!"

This was a splendid subject for a picture; but I should have preferred to have carried out my agreement with Mr. Gambart for the "Streets of London," and much regret now that I did not do so. I fancied that gentleman had grown cool on the subject of the "Streets;" and when I showed him the sketch for "Charles II.'s Last Sunday," he expressed himself so warmly in favour of it in preference to the "Streets" that I accepted a commission from him for three thousand guineas, and at the same time consented to cancel our agreement for the more extensive and expensive subject of the "London Streets."

Bad times have come upon us, and those pictures are, and ever will be, in the air—a matter of everlasting regret to me, from my conviction that my reputation will rest on the pictures I have painted from the life about me.

Before the picture of Charles had advanced far it changed hands, and became the property of Mr. Matthews, with whom it still remains, surrounded by most admirable specimens of the best artists of the day. It was during the progress of this picture that I received a very gratifying acknowledgment of supposed merit in the shape of the Belgian Order of Leopold, conferred on me on the occasion of the exhibition in Brussels of the picture of "Ramsgate Sands," kindly lent by the Queen. I had several English rivals, who were naturally sore at being passed over in my favour; one of them being in excellent odour with the gentleman who did the art criticism in the *Athenæum*, and who, in noticing the

Exhibition at Brussels, was so kind as to announce that the decoration of the Order of Leopold was given to my picture, not because of its merits, but because it happened to belong to the Queen; whereas, if merit had been the guide, the honour must have fallen on other shoulders. On reading this I thought it well to ascertain if these pleasant remarks had any foundation in truth, or whether, as I felt pretty certain, they were the outcome of the disappointment of the critic and his friend. I accordingly wrote to the Belgian official responsible in the matter, telling him that if what the *Athenæum* stated was the truth I should return the Order. Here is his reply:

"Bruxelles, le 7e Novembre, 1866.

"MONSIEUR,

"M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur me charge d'avoir l'honneur de répondre à la lettre que vous lui avez fait parvenir le 5 de ce mois.

"C'est à la suite d'une proposition émanant du Jury des récompenses de l'Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts de 1866, qu'une distinction honorifique vous à été conférée par le Gouvernement du Roi.

"Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur, que dans l'espèce, la considération du mérite des œuvres envoyées à nos expositions est la seule raison déterminante tant des propositions des Jury's, que des décisions que le Gouvernement prend ensuite.

"Pour ce qui vous concerne personnellement, je me plais à ajouter que le succès public a confirmé

pleinement la sanction officielle qui a été accordée à votre talent.

"Je me fais donc un devoir de joindre mes félicitations à celles qui vous ont déjà été adressées par M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur, et je saisis cette occasion pour vous offrir l'assurance de mes sentiments les plus distinguée.

"L'Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts,

"AD. VAN SOUST DE BORKENFELDT.

"A Monsieur W. P. Frith,
"Artiste peintre à Londres."

On receiving this expected and satisfactory confirmation of my opinion of the *Athenæum* critic, I wrote to the *Times* complaining of his conduct, and placing it in such a light as I should have thought would have produced a retractation and an apology. But no, the *Athenæum* maintained silence under proofs of a charge that would have been thought disgraceful by any respectable writer.

To return to Charles II., after much searching I found a man curiously like the king. He seemed in feeble health, but without any sign of fatal illness upon him; but, strange to say, he sat to me for the last time one Sunday, and before "that day se'nnight all was in the dust" with him as with his royal prototype. Yet another and a sadder death I have to record, that of my old and dear friend John Phillip, which began in my studio in front of my picture of Charles, which he had come to criticise. He had been long ailing, but on the day of his visit to me he

seemed in unusual health and spirits. He had just told me the story of Disraeli and his "pallor" (related in the previous chapter), when he suddenly rubbed his hands furiously, and exclaimed:

"What is this?—what can be the matter?" He then staggered and fell into a chair, and said, "I hope to God this is not paralysis!"

"Nonsense!" said I; "don't frighten yourself—'tis but a bad attack of pins and needles," as he continued rubbing his hands.

But in an instant his face changed, was drawn terribly on one side, and his utterance became thick and unintelligible like that of a drunken man. I sent for a doctor, to whom, when he appeared, Phillip said:

"This is very strange—what is the matter with me?"

The doctor said nothing for a moment. Then finding, on his direction to the poor fellow to move his left leg, that he had lost all power over it, he shook his head, and told me to send for a conveyance and get the dying painter home as soon as possible. My dear old friend lingered for ten days, and then there died one of the greatest painters this country has produced, and one of the noblest and truest-hearted of men. We had been boys together. I regretted him, and regret him still; and right glad I am to find that his son Colin is taking a very high position as a water-colour painter, as his admirable works—to say nothing of his admission into the Old Society of Water-Colour Painters—sufficiently prove.

It was the custom till well into the present century for noblemen to wear their stars on all occasions, and I have heard that certain ribald remarks made by the many-headed on the appearance of these decorated nobles in the streets, was the cause of the discontinuance of a practice that fell into desuetude soon after the time when clergymen ceased to walk about in their gowns. Knowing this, I thought I might venture to decorate the King, in my picture, with the Order of the Garter. But here came a difficulty, for I was told that the star was differently formed to the one now worn. Good fortune attended my inquiries, for I found that the actual "George" that was given by Charles I. to Bishop Juxon on the scaffold—with the word "Remember"—was in existence, and in the possession of the Duke of Sutherland, who had inherited it from his father, to whom it had been presented by George IV. Cardinal York, the last of the Stuarts, had bequeathed the Order to the King.

I applied to the Duke of Sutherland, who kindly lent me the jewel, and my "Charles" now wears the Order that very possibly decorated the real man on the occasion represented in the picture; for it has been conjectured, plausibly I think, that the Bishop was to "remember" to give the Order to the Prince of Wales, to whom it may have been consigned, in spite of Cromwell and his myrmidons.

My picture represents nearly a year's incessant work, and my diary shows constant evidence of a settled conviction of its success. It was my custom,

the first day of the year, to express my opinion of my work and my anticipation of the result of it, so as to be able to test the truth or falseness of my judgment. Of course I was often deceived, but the practice is one I would recommend to the young painter, as it may prove both a safeguard against unwarranted enthusiasm, and an encouragement in moments of depression. As an example I quote from the diary of 1867, the year of the completion and exhibition of "Charles II." :

"I find in my last diary that the year '66 began big with the conviction that I was about another, and perhaps a greater, success. Time confirms that idea, and this year finds me slowly, but successfully, completing a picture which has been more than a common delight to me. It is not possible to exaggerate (to convey a notion, even, to the uninitiated) the delight that these things are if you can persuade yourself that you are in the right way. I think I am in that direction—hence my pleasure; and I can't believe myself to be such a fool as to feel in this way without good foundation for my feelings. We shall see. Once more work on—steadily, faithfully, trustingly, hopefully to the end."

I recommend the last paragraph to the attention of the student. When the picture went to the Exhibition I find I wrote :

"Picture left, and joy go with it. Of course, alas! it is inferior to the old masters in every quality. It is a good thing as times go. We shall see. I am very likely wrong."

I have spoken in a previous page of the terrible sensation that thrills the wretched painter on the first sight of a picture on the walls of the Academy. Here is a true and faithful account of mine on the occasion of "Charles II.'s" appearance in Trafalgar Square:

"First sight of 'Charles' in the Exhibition, and never shall I forget it. The picture looked brown and dingy, scarcely recognisable, all the bright colours gone. I wretched in the extreme; couldn't sleep; still all seemed pleased with it."

The after success of the picture may show the young painter how little faith he may place upon his first impressions of his work in a modern Exhibition —a success, indeed, that resulted in the necessity of placing a rail round the picture. One more quotation from the inevitable diary, and I have done with it and the "Charles" picture.

"*Monday, June* 4, '67.—To R.A., where I find a rail round the 'Charles,' to my great surprise and pleasure. This is the third rail round my work in the Exhibition—first the 'Derby Day,' then the 'Royal Marriage,' and now 'The Last Sunday of Charles II.'—Eureka!"

With the great actors of my youth I had no personal acquaintance; but with those who have appeared within the last thirty years I have been on more or less intimate terms. Fechter was a frequent guest at Pembridge Villas. He had a taste for sculpture, and some proficiency in the practice of it. John Parry would have been as great as a painter as

he was in his own inimitable performances, if he had devoted himself to the practice of painting with the assiduity that he bestowed on his own art. Some of those who may read these lines may remember "Mr. Roseleaf's Evening Party"—that extraordinary scene in which the great mimic made his audience see a whole roomful of people by simulation, and little tricks of expression and movement impossible to describe or to be repeated by another. The whole of the scene was constructed in my studio, and performed for the first time in the drawing-room. With Compton, the best actor of the minor Shakespearian characters, I was well acquainted. The man I knew best, and with whom I had most sympathy, was the American actor, Jefferson, whose performance of "Rip Van Winkle" can never be forgotten. Out of his art, he was a highly-cultivated man. He, too, would have been a good painter if he had gone the right way of becoming one. As it was (and perhaps as it is, for the admirable artist is still living and acting in America), his practice of painting a picture every morning is not conducive to the long-sustained effort necessary for the production of works of art. Jefferson shrank from the study of details. His ideas were poetic; but his pictures were painted without reference to nature, and consequently they were but dreams—beautiful often, but unreal and unsubstantial as dreams.

I think it was about the year 1866 that Sothern with "Lord Dundreary" burst upon the town

and took it by storm. The popularity of the actor was very great. I sought his acquaintance, and painted his portrait, which is now, I believe, in New York. Sothern was a very amusing companion; but given to practical joking to an extent that approached mania. He was also a pretended believer in spirit-rapping, and as great a performer at table-rapping as he was on the stage; and I am ashamed to say I assisted him in some of his deceptions, and my friend Henry Tawell was as wicked as ourselves in that particular, as what I am going to relate will prove.

Sothern gave a great dinner, at which two young lords, whose names I suppress, were guests, with many others, all more or less believers. The drawing-room at Sothern's was a long room—it appeared to be two rooms flung into one—at one end of which, after dinner, Tawell was thrown by the actor into a mesmeric trance, in which he gave accurate descriptions of the interior of some of the guests' houses, to their utter amazement. I was far from the two criminals—at the other end of the room, and close to the two lords, who were looking and listening with faces that spoke faith and wonder.

"This must be some trick," said I. "The man cannot possibly describe what he has never seen."

"It is very wonderful," said Lord H——.

"Anyway, let us test him. If he can describe my studio, and tell me the name of the man who sat for me yesterday (one of our models), I will believe in him."

"Ah, if he can do that now, it will be extraordinary indeed," said Lord H——.

"On second thoughts," I said, "I shouldn't think much of his description of the room, because all artists' studios are much alike; but if he names the model, I will believe."

"Well, try him," said my lord.

"No," said I, "you put it to him."

At the moment, Tawell was lying back in an exhausted condition, Sothern standing by him.

Said Lord H——: "Can the gentleman describe Mr. Frith's studio, and name the man who sat for him yesterday?"

Sothern made several passes, and they produced a slow but accurate description of the painting-room.

"Is that right?" said my lord.

"Yes," said I; "but he can't name the model. It is impossible. The name is" (in a whisper to Lord H——) "Harrel."

"Frith says the room is right; but how about the model—can he tell us the name?"

Tawell was very exhausted. Sothern tried passes sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly; but the medium gave no sound. At last the operator said:

"I fear my friend is too exhausted."

"There," said I, "I told you the whole thing is humbug."

"Wait," we heard Sothern say, as he leant his ear close to Tawell. "Can you name the man who sat to Frith yesterday?"

Tawell muttered something we could not hear. Sothern, with his ear still closer to Tawell, said:

"What? Can't you speak a little louder?"

Some more passes, and the mesmerized man seemed to be revived into sudden strength again, and in a clear voice said, "Harrel."

I think I acted my astonishment very well; and I am quite sure the young lords turned as white as ghosts: the idea that the whole thing was prearranged before dinner never entered their minds. I believe both those gentlemen are still living, and if by chance they should read these lines, they will know how it was that Tawell knew "who sat for Frith yesterday."

A Mrs. Marshall was a celebrated medium. She was generally accompanied by a young woman she called her niece when she gave—or rather sold—her services at different houses. At one of her performances I was present, and some strange tricks were played. This time I was not a confederate, but a pretended believer, and one of a large party sitting round a table at a friend's house. There were some ladies who wore large crinolines; and when the younger Marshall put a candle under the table to enable the spirit to see to put some coins into a tumbler which was placed there for the purpose, after hearing one or two pieces of money dropped into the glass, I, without really wishing to discover anything of the trick, looked beneath the table to see if the candle was at a safe distance from the crinolines, when I saw the younger cheat moving the coins

with her feet towards the tumbler. She had put off her slippers, and her naked toes were apparent as she used them like fingers, and with extraordinary cleverness, for amongst the coins was a fourpenny-piece—a difficult thing to move about with one's toes.

Mrs. Marshall gave *séances* at her own house to all and sundry who were willing to pay five shillings for the amusement; and Sothern, hearing of the elderly medium, went with a friend—Toole, I think it was—paid his five shillings, and gravely took his place at the table. He became greatly awe-stricken at the various manifestations. His excitement and terror became very serious, and at last culminated in a convulsive fit. He foamed at the mouth (by the help of a piece of soap), rolled on the ground, and bit the old woman in the leg.

A more serious and less defensible practical joke was played by Sothern in the following manner. He was acting in a piece—the name of which he mentioned when he told me the story, but I forget it—when he noticed a lady and gentleman sitting alone in the stage-box. The lady was handsome. The gentleman, somewhat her senior, seldom spoke to his companion; indeed, they appeared an ill-assorted couple. Sothern's familiar demon was in full power, and when in the course of the play he had to quit the stage for a time, he wrote a note and sent it to the lady, containing, as well as I can recollect, these words:

"Beloved one! Now and ever beloved! Can it be true that you are married? Is the man with you your husband? Little dreamed I when I came to

the theatre that I should see one so inexpressibly dear to me in the possession of another. Can he know—can you have forgotten all that has passed between us? I dare not sign this with my name. *You know it*, and I implore you to let me see you once more, and hear from your own lips that you are lost to me for ever. Write to the club as usual."

Sothern told me he returned to the stage and continued his part, with an eye on the lady just as she received his note. She read it, or the greater part of it, and hastily thrust it into her pocket. Her saturnine companion insisted on seeing it. The lady hesitated, then flatly refused. The gentleman persisted, and the note was produced.

"I assure you," said Sothern, "the man's expression would have been a study for you. Talk of looking daggers, he looked broadswords. I am sorry to say I couldn't hear what he said, but I saw what he did; he jumped up and rushed out of the box, taking the lady with him, and I saw no more of 'em."

The above is a pretty clear proof that when the love of practical joking takes possession of a man, he may indulge it in a manner that is unjustifiable. Another instance admits of defence. The actor was very fond of marmalade, and had ordered rather a large quantity at a shop. When the marmalade was delivered, it was found to be faulty in many respects, and Sothern went to the shop and demanded back the money he had paid for it. The shopkeeper refused, upon which Sothern put an advertisement in two newspapers, announcing that

orange-peel in any quantity that may be found at music-halls, theatres, or at other places of private or public resort where oranges are a favourite fruit, will be purchased at the best price by So-and-So, at their well-known establishment at Blank Place.

It will surprise no one that practical joking, however agreeable to the performer, is so little satisfactory to the victims of it that an angry feeling is set up, costing the joker many a friend. A notable example of this occurred at Sothern's table on an occasion when, as he said, "He had got them all into a state of mind to believe anything." The spirits were present and very demonstrative, table-movements and spectral effects were plentiful, when the company were surprised by an announcement that the spirit of Sheridan was present, and he would like a glass of wine! This was too much for Sothern, who exclaimed:

"Some one is playing a trick; we all know Sheridan's habits, but it is absurd to suppose that he retains his propensities in a disembodied condition. I must really ask that no one will attempt to trifle in this way."

The spirits were again appealed to, and the ghost of Sheridan rapped loudly and angrily, again demanding a glass of wine.

"Well," said Sothern, "this is very strange," filling a glass full of champagne. "Now, to see that no trick is played, do you," speaking to Tawell, who sat next to him, "place yourself beneath the table, and tell the company what takes place."

Tawell slipped under the table, Sothern held the wine below, and Tawell drank it.

The effect on the company when the empty glass appeared, and Tawell's frightened face with it, was electric. A chorus of grateful raps from Sheridan closed that scene, leaving the audience in what Sothern called "exactly the right condition for further operations."

To prove how a friend may be hurt and lost I may add that amongst the guests was an old friend of Sothern's—heretofore a sceptic, but on this occasion an enthusiastic believer—who had recently lost his mother. The spirit of the departed was present, and the raps announced that if her son would put his hand beneath the table the hand of the dead would touch it. Near the chair of the actor was some iced water; his naked toes were plunged into it and applied to the believer's hand for a moment, but long enough to produce a startling effect. Then the victim turned pale, the tears started to his eyes, and he fell back sobbing in his chair. The trick was discovered some time afterwards, and the spiritualist lost his friend—and no wonder!

Sothern told me a curious circumstance in connection with the play of "The American Cousin," originally produced in New York, the principal part being filled by Jefferson, whose admirable acting made it, or was intended to have made it, the chief part of the play. Sothern—then acting in the name of Stewart—was cast for the insignificant part of Lord Dundreary, much to his disgust. He had

other reasons for dislike to the management, and he now determined to revenge himself by making the foolish lord supremely ridiculous. Amongst the properties he discovered a preposterous dressing-gown. He practised a way of walking, or rather skipping about, unlike the locomotion of any creature out of Bedlam. He invented a drawl equally unnatural, and armed with these weapons he hoped to damn the piece. To his utter astonishment the means he had adopted to ruin the play insured its success, and from that moment Lord Dundreary became its most attractive character. I saw the play several times in London, and on each occasion the actor varied the part by the introduction of allusions, in a Dundreary spirit, to events of the moment, or in what is called "gagging," to any extent. If he found his gag tell upon the audience he repeated it; if not, he changed it for another. On one occasion he told me that, discovering the young lady in the play immersed in a book, and apparently surprised by its contents, he inquired in Dundreary tones what she was reading. The young lady replied that the book was one of Chinese travels, and the writer asserted that criminals condemned to death in China could, by a money-payment, procure substitutes who underwent the punishment for them.

"Can this be true?" asked the young lady.

"Perfectly," said Dundreary. "My brother Sam is intimately acquainted with some of the Chinese who get their living by it."

This, Sothern told me, he thought would have "told" with the audience—and I confess I should have thought so too; but except an old gentleman in the stalls, who let off a laugh like a loud bark, "there was not a smile amongst them," and the Chinese joke was never repeated.

I hesitate in any allusion to living people, actors or others. I think I may boast that I have an acquaintance, more or less intimate, with most of the best actors of the present day, and I have the satisfaction of feeling that I was one of the first to foretell the great fame that has been so deservedly won by my friend Irving; and, curiously enough, I may say the same as regards Miss Ellen Terry, in whose performance—almost *en amateur*—many years ago, I discovered, or thought I did, germs of the genius since so apparent to all the world. But I feel it is time to return to a less congenial subject, namely, myself and my own doings, and I find that I am again "in trouble" in respect of *subject*.

The remainder of the year 1867 was taken up by the execution of small matters, with the exception of one picture from "She Stoops to Conquer;" the scene chosen being that in which Mrs. Hardcastle desires her cub of a son to stand back to back with Miss Neville to see which is the taller, a position of which Tony takes advantage to bestow a blow upon the lady's head with his own thick skull, to her discomfiture, and his mother's disgust. The picture contains four figures, the third being Mr. Hastings, the lover of Miss Neville. The

subject is a good one of its class, but far wide of what I desired to illustrate. The picture was pretty successful, and is now in the collection of Mr. Matthews. This, with a portrait and a small subject from Sterne, occupied me till, on reading, or rather re-reading, Boswell's "Johnson," I found a scene that might be sufficiently interesting to repay its reproduction, containing, as it does, so many historical and eminent characters. The locality is Boswell's lodgings in Bond Street, and the persons present are Boswell, Johnson, Garrick, Murphy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Goldsmith, and others. The guests are assembled before dinner, waiting for one who is, *à la* Landseer, belated. Boswell asks, "Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?" "Why, yes," replies Johnson, "if the one will suffer more by your sitting down than the six will do by waiting."

In the interval of waiting, Garrick is described as holding the lapels of Johnson's coat, the sage looking down upon him with tender interest. As there was nearly the difference of a foot in the height of the two men, Johnson must have regarded the actor from a physical as well as a moral elevation sufficiently striking, and though I took especial pains to ascertain the precise height of the two figures, and placed them on the canvas in their true relation to each other, I was told by a critic who had most probably never given two thoughts to the matter, that "Johnson was too tall." Boswell sat with watch in hand, whilst Goldsmith posed before the mirror in all the splendour of the celebrated plum-coloured

coat. Now came the dreadful model grievance—the real people were gone, and the substitutes difficult, in some cases impossible, to obtain. Excellent authorities in the way of busts and portraits were plentiful, but to find anyone with the least resemblance to Garrick or Johnson was a puzzle indeed. Nollekens' portrait-bust of Johnson was of great service; it is full of character, and evidently a striking likeness, but much damaged by a flowing head of hair—an ornament impossible to Johnson or anybody else who habitually wore a wig. Johnson remonstrated with the sculptor, and insisted that not only should the wig have been represented, but the coat and neckcloth also, instead of the flowing locks and a sort of towel or other drapery encircling the neck, according to the classic taste of the day. I think the Doctor was right, but Nollekens did not, and positively refused to make the change, for several reasons; one being that "he had paid a man eighteenpence to sit for the hair, and he was not going to that expense for nothing." Nollekens was a miser, and in other respects an oddity. Mulready, who remembered calling on him to express his acknowledgment for a vote that the sculptor may, or may not, have given him, on his election as an Associate, described the sculptor and his workshop to me—the former as a little thin-lipped, mean-looking creature; the latter as filled with casts of admirable quality. Amongst them Nollekens showed the young painter a bust, or "busto," as he called it, of Yorick, otherwise Sterne.

"Yes, that's Yorick's busto that I done (*sic*) in Rome. And that—oh, that's just a bit of accidental natur," alluding to a lovely female figure which had attracted Mulready's admiration.

Pictures were *picturs* and nature was *natur* in the Nollekens times. I don't suppose Reynolds ever said *picture* in his life.

Landseer had a story of Nollekens worth repeating. George IV., when Prince of Wales, sat to Nollekens for his bust, which was being finished, in marble. The sculptor was working close to his model, when a little marble-dust found its way to the collar of the Prince's coat. Nollekens blew it off, and in the same breath said to the Prince:

"How's your father?"

The King was just recovering from a long illness.

"Thank you, Mr. Nollekens, he is much better."

"Ah! that's all right!" said Nollekens. "It would be a sad thing if he was to die, for we shall never have another King like him."

"Thank you," said the Prince.

"Ah, sir! you may depend upon that."

But I am drifting away from my picture and the difficulties of it. After many trials from a variety of models, I succeeded in getting a tolerable resemblance to the various personages, as we know them from prints and pictures, and it was not till after the picture was in the Exhibition, unfortunately, that I found I might have secured an excellent model for Garrick. And thus the matter fell out: My friend Mr. Cundall, the manager of the Stafford Place branch

of the London and Westminster Bank, received a visit from a stranger on a matter of business connected with the bank. The moment the gentleman entered the manager's private room, his extraordinary resemblance to Garrick so struck Cundall that my picture instantly came into his mind, together with a regret that it was too late for me to avail myself of so valuable a model. After some talk, the business, whatever it may have been, was concluded, and it was necessary for the stranger to give his name, and the manager's surprise may be imagined when he found it was—Garrick. His astonishment was so evident that Mr. Garrick asked the cause of it. This was explained, when the stranger said:

"Well, the likeness is easily accounted for, for my grandfather was Garrick's brother."

The female element, considered justly an important factor in all pictures, was conspicuous by its absence from the company assembled at Boswell's lodgings in Bond Street, or only on evidence in the form of a pretty servant-girl, who was represented as announcing the late arrival. I think I may boast that having painted so many pretty women, I had acquired a reputation for the feat, and it was a great objection to the "Garrick" picture, both on my own part and that of my friends, that the conditions of the subject debarred me from the advantage that the introduction of the most charming portion of humanity would have afforded me. Many were the predictions that the picture "would never sell," a

feeling strongly shared by Mr. Agnew, who bought it from me for, I think, twelve hundred pounds.

"It is a capital picture!" said that eminent authority; "but we shall have to keep it, Frith."

That "you should never prophesy unless you know," was very fully proved in this case, for the picture changed hands at the private view, and became the property of Mr. Mendell, of Manchester, at whose death, some years afterwards, the picture was sold at Christie's for four thousand five hundred and sixty-seven pounds ten shillings, being the largest price that had been paid for the work of a living artist at that time.

END OF VOL. I.

BILLING & SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.
J. D. & Co.

00025865

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018